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The Nation.

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BURN: BAN BUSTERS

EDITORIAL

TAKING OUT QADDAFI

For President Reagan, the *casus belli*—or more accurately, the reason for sanctions—was Libyan leader Qaddafi's support for the perpetrators and the principle of the recent terrorist attacks in Vienna and Rome. But Reagan's revenge is an executive order waiting for a provocation. Early on in his Administration, his foreign policy counselors identified Libya as a target of opportunity against which the President could prove his willingness to "take one of their pieces" off the geopolitical checkerboard. Then, while Reagan slept, there was the dogfight between American and Libyan planes over the Gulf of Sidra. After the Shiite hijacking of TWA 847 to Beirut last spring, Reagan warned that further terrorist attacks against Americans anywhere in the world would be answered with unspecified actions against Libya, Nicaragua, North Korea, Cuba or the P.L.O.—the five pieces he'd most like to eliminate.

Qaddafi is not to be trusted and may well have had a hand in the airport attacks. Possibly, however, his involvement was limited to the maintenance of terrorist training camps in Libya, which gives him equal standing with dozens of great leaders around the world, including P.W. Botha in Namibia and Ronald Reagan in Honduras. But the President's order last week was not predicated on specifics or solid evidence. Once again, the Administration moved to exploit political madness for the purpose of intervention in Third World crises, as it did in Grenada and in Lebanon.

The trouble with that practice is that it obviates the effective use of diplomacy to achieve a political settlement. A policy of revenge even mildly pursued guarantees the continuation of the conflict it is supposed to resolve. In this case, Reagan can't take Qaddafi off the board, and he may find that the game will get worse.

SHULTZ AND PEN
E.L. Doctorow

NEW DEBATE IN MOSCOW
Stephen F. Cohen

ROSE BIRD RUNS FOR HER LIFE
Edwin Chen

THE FALLEN WORLD OF LOUISE GLÜCK
Don Bogen

FUENTES'S 'OLD GRINGO'
John Seabrook

LINGUISTIC OLD GUARD
Jim Quinn

WEST BANK AND GAZA

HOW ISRAEL CAN REVERSE 'ANNEXATION'

For the past four years, Meron Benvenisti has directed the West Bank Data Base Project, documenting Israel's increasing control over the lives, land and economy of the Palestinians of the occupied territories. Although no one in Israel or abroad disputes his figures, few agree with his conclusions and their implications for the future of the region. Israeli liberals and peace activists attacked him when, in 1983, he suggested in an article in The New York Review of Books *that the process of annexation had become inexorable. What follows is both a response to his critics and a call for a new approach to the Israeli-Palestinian dilemma.* —*The Editors*

MERON BENVENISTI

After the Lebanon war, I ventured to conclude that the clock had struck midnight and a new phase had begun. I wrote: "Theoretically the process might be 'reversible,' but a realistic estimate of the forces at work for annexation [of the West Bank and Gaza] as against those that oppose it leads to the conclusion that for the foreseeable future all of Palestine will be ruled by an Israeli government; that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has therefore become an internal, ethnic conflict, and that Israel is now a dual society."

I felt that such a dramatic statement was necessary because all those involved in or witness to the tragedy are captives of an obsolete paradigm and refuse to let realities penetrate their well-guarded preconceptions. They find it comforting to believe that time stands still, that options remain open forever and that processes are open-ended or can be reversed at will.

(*Continued on Page 46*)

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LETTERS.

FOUNDATION SUPPORT

Chicago

You have invited me to comment on a series of articles by Jamie Kitman that purports to describe the early years of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation ["The Chicago School of Philanthropy," Dec. 7; also parts II and III, Dec. 14 and 21 respectively]. It is highly likely that these articles libel the MacArthur Foundation and its distinguished board of directors, and it is clear that Kitman's work is one-sided and irresponsible. His articles are primarily the result of copying selected segments of public court documents filed in 1983 and 1984 as a part of a suit brought by the son of the foundation's founder, a suit subsequently dismissed with prejudice.

A major foundation should expect that its actions might be reviewed by the media but hardly by a reporter who repeats accusations without checking the facts, or in the face of facts, or without realizing that the facts he does quote prove his theses absurd.

Kitman indicts the directors for their work in protecting the assets left to the foundation by John MacArthur, implying that they were small-minded men of little talent. The record shows differently. In 1978, when the foundation was activated, the value of the assets was just under $800 million; by 1985 this amount had increased to more than $2.2 billion. In fact, when one major part of the divestiture (to Winthrop) was challenged, a Federal court reviewed the deal and found nothing in the actions of the directors that the court "could criticize even by hindsight."

In a few short years the MacArthur Foundation has created innovative programs of research into mental health problems, which affect 20 percent of the population; research aimed at conquering parasitic diseases, which afflict several billion people worldwide; fellowship awards to support exceptionally creative and productive individuals in a wide variety of fields (now 116 such fellows in every field of science, art and the humanities); and international security studies to help prevent nuclear war. Kitman ignores those and many other significant grant-making activities, which lie at the heart of a foundation's work. In fact, by the end of 1985 the foundation had distributed more than $300 million for hundreds of worthy purposes.

Because of its newness and size, and because of litigation filed by Rod MacArthur, the foundation has been the subject of extraordinary scrutiny since its inception. State and Federal government agencies, the courts and many responsible journalists have reviewed every aspect of foundation activities with no findings of deception or of illegality. It is unfortunate that *The Nation* had to resort to a one-sided reading of old history to fill its columns.

John E. Corbally, President
John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation

KITMAN REPLIES

Edgewater, N.J.

If nothing else, John E. Corbally's letter sheds light on why he and his co-directors get paid so much. It is good and original. Unfortunately, the part that's good isn't original, and the part that's original isn't very good.

What's good about it? He is to be applauded for the frank recognition that the foundation's activities deserve to be scrutinized. However, his evident belief that the fund's charitable donations absolve it of its many transgressions just won't do. And his failure to cite even a single factual error hardly supports any charge of libel or irresponsibility.

What's original about Corbally's missive? Taking credit for growth in the value of the foundation's assets stands out. Much of the foundation's wealth lay in its real estate holdings. It grew during a period of real estate hyperinflation, notwithstanding the directors' efforts. He may be congratulated for even raising the question of valuation, for it was the foundation's suspect practices in this area that lay at the heart of many of the charges that were leveled against it. Corbally's use of an out-of-context ruling is similarly refreshing.

Perhaps his most innovative statement, though, is that the late Rod MacArthur's suit was dismissed "with prejudice." The implication appears to be that there was a judicial finding that the younger MacArthur's charges were baseless. In fact, the exact opposite is true. Prior to the withdrawal of the suit, scant days before MacArthur's death, the presiding state court judge had determined that it stated claims sufficient to go to trial. Accordingly, he denied foundation requests to dismiss the action. Had MacArthur not fallen ill, the board would have had to answer for its mismanagement, self-dealing and other breaches of fiduciary duty. "Old history" would not have been swept, as Corbally prefers, under the rug.

Jamie Kitman

HOTTER THAN A PEPPER SPROUT

Austin, Tex.

Molly Ivins's article was truly a gem ["The Gibber Wins One & Other News," Nov. 23]. I wager, though, many folks outside the sometimes fair state of Texas may not realize just how good it was. Probably most non-Texans do not know the identity of Bubba—the quintessential Texas redneck, who drives a pickup truck and eats anything if you just cover it with enough gravy.

Ivins's remarks about the peace marchers having trouble making a deposit at an Amarillo blood bank brought to mind the plight of a friend of mine who tried to sell his blood but was turned down on account he's deaf. In Texas you never know: maybe deafness is contagious, just like dumbness.

Steve Bratteng

AUTHOR'S QUERY

San Francisco

I am compiling a book of personal stories by people who are acting alone or in small nonstructured groups to effect social change. I would like to hear from anyone who is working on issues concerning nuclear weapons, hunger, the environment (ecological saboteurs especially) and the rights of women, minority groups, gay people and workers. Stories are welcome on other social issues as well, and may describe the efforts of others.

The main thesis of my book is that confrontational politics on a small scale is the path to social change and that individual acts of courage are the proper and necessary response to a political system that no longer works for people's needs. I encourage anyone who is struggling for social change to write to me at 4006 25th Street, San Francisco, CA 94114. *Donald Currie*

CLARIFICATION

Stanley Reed's "Mubarak Walks a Shaky Tightrope," Dec. 28/Jan. 4, contained two sentences that require clarification. They should have read:

"Political counselor Osama al-Baz, who is normally the best channel to Mubarak, was in Tunis at the time, so the American Embassy in Cairo relied on Foreign Minister Esmat Abdel Megid, who proved an unsatisfactory conduit." (page 705)

"The money sent home by the approximately 3 million Egyptians working abroad has also been affected, since Saudi Arabia, Libya, Kuwait and other employers of expatriate labor have slashed their spending and will force as many as 500,000 Egyptian workers home." (pages 707-708)

The Nation welcomes letters—typed, double spaced and no longer than 300 words, please. Longer letters may be edited for reasons of space. Our policy is to publish as many letters as space permits, but inevitably a backlog develops, so please bear with us.

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EDITORIALS.

The Hart Panteth

The news from Troublesome Gulch, Colorado, is that Senator Gary Hart is mulling over strategies and sorting out issues for his Presidential campaign in 1988. It may seem a bit early but it takes time to raise the money, gather a crew and write the scenario for the nation's top public production. A Presidential election is like a Hollywood blockbuster. Four years in the making, financed by giant conglomerates and amortized by the dimes and dollars of countless customers, tailored to the trends of pop culture, the campaign is concept first and content last.

Gary Hart: The Movie begins with a preppy cowboy hero holed up in his ranchette whittling away at a new image. Unsure of his support in the mountains where he makes his home, he will not run for re-election to the Senate when his term expires this year. That early retreat may cost him media momentum, but it has the virtue of removing him from dangerous legislative debates where votes are counted and positions recorded. He need not take a stand, for example, on military aid to the Nicaraguan *contras*, on specific cuts in government programs, on appropriations for weapons systems, on abortion, school prayer or new tax plans. The risk, of course, is "to be that visible that long and have nothing to say," as he told reporters who dropped in at Troublesome Gulch this past week. But then, what is to be said?

"I haven't yet heard what the message is," Hart a

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with characteristic ingenuousness. None of the various Democratic hopefuls has "quite worked out [a] foreign policy." Everyone is still looking for "a way to be pro-defense without giving the Pentagon everything it wants," he mused. He will seek the endorsement of traditional Democratic constituencies (the same "special interests" he condemned Walter Mondale for appeasing in the 1984 primaries), but he may not be "willing to say what they [want] to hear to get their endorsements." That gets *Hart* through the opening titles; now where's the rest of him?

It may be that Hart, the candidate, will come up with the message that could give direction to the Democratic Party, but the signs are not auspicious. Party politicos have been looking for "new ideas" for quite a while, and that they are more in the dark than ever suggests that the search itself is flawed. What they lack is a political context from which a program could emerge. The old Democratic context has been reorganized by the Republicans on the promise of peace (after Vietnam), prosperity (after recession and inflation) and imperial resurgence (after OPEC, Iran et al.). Voters who have chosen the Republican path to wealth, privilege and patriotic pep have no reason to stray.

There is another political context that the Democrats could formulate, but party leaders seem determined to avoid it like the plague. A real majority—as opposed to an electoral plurality—is shortchanged or seriously endangered by the Reagan program. Not only blacks, Hispanics, the poor and farm families have been left out of Eden, but other less obvious constituencies can be identified in areas of Republican neglect. Entrepreneurial prosperity has not trickled down to the huge new class of underpaid and underemployed service workers who may have upwardly mobile aspirations but earn downwardly mobile salaries. Deregulation and corporate favoritism have created a population threatened by toxic extinction—the cancer constituency—that is overdue for political organization. Women as a class are delegitimized by Reaganism.

Hart and his fellows could find the message they have missed in a new Democratic coalition of those forces and others similarly situated. But most of the party leaders are uncomfortable with novelty. They listen to the media telling them that the country is in a profoundly conservative age and don't understand that the only way to win is to challenge that conservatism rather than surrender to it. The Democrats were so afraid of unleashing electoral power they could not control that they never mounted the registration drives and get-out-the-vote operations that could have stopped or contained the Reagan landslide.

The genius of the Democratic Party in the last half-century was its ability to combine the interests of a business base and a populist constituency into a kind of mass movement. Coming out of the Depression and World War II, those interests were seen as compatible and the movement flourished. But radical changes in the national political economy and the international environment have destroyed the basis for solidarity. The Democrats will decline as a party and a movement until they come to grips with the way things are now and lose their nostalgia for the way we were.

Fighting Back

The following letter from DeNise Watkins-Hamilton was received by Earl Shorris, who edited While Someone Else Is Eating, *a collection of articles about the poor that first appeared in* The Nation. *—The Editors*

Easton, Pennsylvania

I bit back tears as I read *While Someone Else Is Eating*. I have lived much of the same double binds and I am still living them, looking for a way out. The story by Maxine Kumin, "It's Very Hard to Say I'm Poor," especially hit home. Although I'm not a single parent, I am a woman with similar problems.

Knowing your children are going to bed hungry is not an easy thing. I've felt I was fully responsible, I was doing something wrong: maybe I don't work hard enough or I'm not smart enough. I know now it's only partially my fault. The system is designed to keep you down and apathetic so you keep quiet and don't fight back. . . .

I worked as soon as I could at 17 years old at about anything, put myself through practical nursing school with the help of grants and scholarships. Shortly after graduating I found out L.P.N.s were not in demand and so I had to settle for low-paying jobs.

After I married, my husband and I found ourselves parents. We had our daughter on welfare because my husband's on-the-job training (Federally sponsored) was so low paying. The system sucked us in and no matter how hard we try, we've been on and off welfare for almost seven years. . . .

My husband works when he finds it. We live in a depressed area where major steel companies have been swallowed up by Reaganomics. Competition for even the low-paying, menial jobs is fierce. There were also times when I needed my husband at home because a disability left me unable to care for our toddler. During those times we were totally at the mercy of the welfare system. . . .

We get a pittance in food stamps, no medical benefits when we do work, no medical assistance. Medical, rent and utility bills are building higher and higher and our family is sinking deeper and deeper into a pit we'll never rise above.

What will we have to offer our 5-year-old? Sometimes I don't even have money for snack time at school. Should we give up *all* our pleasures because we are poor? . . . How do we survive? How do we free ourselves? How do we care for ourselves when we can't afford to?

I have a Pell grant for the local community college and will work for an associate degree in nursing, eligible for R.N. licensing. Maybe that will get us on our feet. I'm not sure. How can one go to school and do well when your child, your husband and you yourself are hungry? . . .

We, the poor, must look beyond our apathy and become politically active. Surely there are enough of us to upset the voting tallies of the next Presidential and Congressional elections. We must become active and fight. We should let our poverty be known and not be afraid or ashamed to tell Reagan what's happened under his Administration. I could

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fill a book with the pain, frustration, anger, hunger, tears and shame I and many others have known under Reagan's ignorant and hateful knife. Maybe I will put it *all* down and send it to him. Or would he think it's fiction?

Shultz and PEN

January 9, 1985

A thousand writers from forty-five countries are convening this Sunday for the 48th International PEN Congress, the writers and poets organization founded by Amy Dawson Scott and John Galsworthy in England in 1921 and dedicated to the free expression of ideas and the enlightenment that comes of an uncensored world literature. Some of the visiting writers are Nadine Gordimer of South Africa, Jorge Amado of Brazil, Amos Oz of Israel, the Polish Nobel laureate Czeslaw Milosz, Margaret Atwood of Canada, Kobo Abe of Japan, Gyorgy Konrád of Hungary, Salman Rushdie of England, Günter Grass of West Germany and John Updike of the United States.

Also present to deliver an address at the opening ceremonies at the New York Public Library will be Secretary of State George Shultz.

Although a board member of the host PEN American Center, I have not been active in the planning or fund raising for this important occasion. I have attended no board meetings in the past year or so and am not acquainted with the thinking of those of my colleagues responsible for inviting Shultz to appear.

It is difficult for me to understand why he was invited. What has Shultz written? What is his connection to the world of letters? Has he been on the boards of libraries or publishing houses? Has he ever as Secretary of State championed the cause of universal free expression that so concerns the international community of writers?

At the last international congress held in the United States, in 1966, no member of the Johnson Administration was invited to address the writers. The late Ignazio Silone was heard then to remark what a pleasure it was to go to one of these congresses and not hear from the presiding politicians of the host country. Indeed, America is one of the few nations in the world in which writers don't have to ask for the endorsement of the government. I imagine the looks on the faces of the hundreds of foreign guests convened in the public library when they realize that American PEN has put itself in the position of a bunch of obedient hacks in the writers union of an Eastern European country gathering to be patted on the head by the Minister of Culture. It is astonishing to me that my dedicated colleagues on the board would put in months and months of effort and do all that fund raising and planning merely to set up their fellow writers as a forum for the Reagan Administration. In those countries where governments hold firmly in hand and in power their own PEN centers, it is customary for august officials to welcome the PEN congress. One would have thought among all the messages to be sent to all the writers of the world, including those who will arrive and expect to be released for a few moments from the repressions of their homelands, that here in the United States we are free and independent and affirm our freedom and exercise it without fear of being thought irresponsible and disloyal by our political leaders. And that we don't need their imprimatur in order to get together to talk and eat and drink.

Shultz's government has been conscientious in its application of the ideological exclusion provisions of the McCarran-Walter Act, which keeps out such dangers to the Republic as the Nobel Prize–winner Gabriel García Márquez. His government is so contemptuous of language as to insist that the bands of *contra* terrorists—whom it wants Congress to fund, and who wage war against civilians in Nicaragua, killing men and women and children and mutilating their bodies—are "freedom fighters." This at once befouls our tongue and defames the freedom fighters of Hungary, who in 1956 with a few rifles and rocks and stones attempted to stop a Soviet invasion of their country.

Sunday at the PEN congress there will be several delegations of writers whose national intellectual communities have suffered considerable misfortune because of the policies of the Reagan Administration—the white racist government of South Africa, for instance, which this Administration has supported and identified with and which Shultz and the President have only reluctantly criticized, under pressure from Congress and the public. Writers both black and white have been tortured in South African prisons without a word on their behalf from Shultz. There will also be a delegation from our ally Turkey, which routinely imprisons and tortures its writers, and from the Chile of our friend Gen. Augusto Pinochet, whose sensitivity to poets writing of democracy and freedom can be compared to Hitler's sensitivity to Jewish intellectuals.

The charter of American PEN specifies that it is a nonpolitical organization. Certainly its protests on behalf of imprisoned and abused writers are objectively applied no matter what the ideology of the malfeasant government. Indeed, one of the best accounts of the abuses of human rights and free speech around the world is kept by the Freedom to Write Committee of the American PEN. Not a month goes by when it is not sending its fervent protests and appeals on behalf of writers imprisoned in countries whose governments Shultz just as fervently supports. Why then has the American PEN betrayed itself? It is more than a shame; it verges on the scandalous that those currently in stewardship of the American PEN and the 48th International PEN Congress should have so violated the meaning of their own organization as to identify it with, and put itself at the feet of, the most ideologically right-wing Administration this country has yet seen.

The next voice you hear, my fellow writers, will be Secretary of State George Shultz, who will address us on the values to a democracy of free speech and uncensored literature.

E.L. DOCTOROW

E.L. Doctorow's latest novel is World's Fair *(Random House).*

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BEAT THE DEVIL.

The Story of a Test Ban

In came 1986 and out went the Soviet moratorium on nuclear test explosions. On July 29, Mikhail Gorbachev announced that, effective August 6, the Soviet Union would suspend all testing until New Year's Day. If the United States joined the moratorium the ban would continue. The Soviet test ranges have been silent, but since August 6 the United States has carried out seven nuclear blasts. Thus passes a major opportunity to curb the arms race, and if the Reagan Administration must carry prime responsibility, we should not forget the sheeplike complicity of the U.S. press.

Sheeplike? By all means. The collapse of critical vigilance would be comical if it were not so abject. Consider the most recent test, carried out in Nevada on December 28. The next day's newspapers stated that the test, officially top secret, centered on the nuclear X-ray laser. This device, powered by the explosion of an H-bomb, is part of the President's love child, the Strategic Defense Initiative. A less than sheeplike press would presumably have asked the White House how this test squared with the President's report to Congress, on his return from Geneva, in which he said, "I made it clear [to Mr. Gorbachev] that S.D.I. has nothing to do with offensive weapons; that, instead, we are investigating nonnuclear defensive systems." Since when is an H-bomb nonnuclear? Was the President deceiving Gorbachev?

This particular sheep saga got under way at the very moment the Soviet Union made public its test moratorium. For the preceding forty-eight hours the Reagan Administration, alerted by the Russians of the impending announcement, had been devising a strategy to belittle the importance of the Soviet offer and get it suitably situated in the national consciousness as "propaganda." The trick, well learned over the Reagan years, was to seize the initiative with strong statements, false in whole or in part, made with the knowledge that reporters will be too uninformed or too cowed to counter. Expert rebuttal only comes later, in a letter to the editor or in a specialty periodical, but by this time the propaganda has done its work.

Thus, on July 29, Administration officials rushed to the networks with three arguments and a proposal: that the Soviet Union was only announcing a moratorium because it had already completed its test series for 1985; that the Russians had breached the 1958 moratorium and there was no more reason to trust Gorbachev than Khrushchev; that in light of Soviet cheating and refusal to accept "on-site" inspection, the real issue was verification and therefore the United States was inviting the Soviet Union to attend its next test in Nevada.

The claims and the proposal were either untrue or tendentious, but they did the job. The networks echoed them obediently in thirty-second bites. None was anything other than dismal, though CBS was the worst. Dan Rather broke the news of the moratorium with the words, "The United States and the Soviet Union today each did some public posturing about nuclear testing," and Lesley Stahl followed with the information that "not to be outmaneuvered in the propaganda war, the Reagan White House had its own, unconditional proposal ready"—i.e., the invitation to Nevada. The idea that propaganda and substance are not necessarily antithetical escaped the commentators.

National security adviser Robert McFarlane appeared on *Nightline* that evening, and although Ted Koppel attempted skeptical cross-examination, his knowledge was inadequate to match McFarlane's volley of half-truths and outright lies. Had Koppel and the rest given air time to experts such as the readily available Adm. Eugene Carroll of the Center for Defense Information, the Administration could not have mangled truth so cruelly. It was highly unlikely that the Soviet Union had completed its 1985 test cycle since there had only been seven Soviet tests between January and July of 1985, as against eleven in the same months of 1984. This compares with eleven U.S. tests through July 1985 and ten a year earlier. In fact, by late August McFarlane had already conceded that the "completed" and the "accelerated" test-cycle arguments might well be false.

In the case of the 1958 moratorium, the press swallowed some outrageous rewriting of history. On March 31 of that year Gromyko announced the Soviet Union was unilaterally ending the testing of nuclear weapons. But he warned that if other nations continued with nuclear testing, the Russians would abandon their moratorium. On December 29, 1959, President Eisenhower announced that the United States no longer felt bound by the voluntary moratorium—and later confided in his memoirs that he would have authorized renewed testing except that his Administration was near its end. The French had never joined the moratorium and on February 13, 1960, they tested a nuclear device in the Sahara.The Russians began testing again on September 1, 1961, and the United States followed suit two weeks later.

The Peace Movement Joins the Rout

Against the Soviet initiative of August 6, the propaganda offensive by the White House was entirely successful where it counts, at home. Almost from the moment it became operational the Soviet moratorium ceased to be a significant item on the American political agenda. Indeed some columnists began referring to it as "a proposed moratorium," and this refusal to recognize the fact that the Soviet Union had unilaterally stopped testing spread as far as the U.S. peace movement, which continued—with a wondrous sense of balance and political discretion—to call on both Reagan and Gorbachev to freeze the arms race, even though by definition a freeze involves the suspension of nuclear tests.

Among the arguments on which the press never truly challenged the Administration was the assertion that such a moratorium was pointless anyway, since the Russians are congenital cheaters and adequate verification is impossible.

On this matter of verification and cheating we have to bear in mind two treaties and one set of negotiations. The Threshold Test Ban Treaty of 1974 and the Peaceful Nuclear Explosions Treaty of 1976 both limit underground tests to 150 kilotons and contain provisions for verifica-

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ALEXANDER COCKBURN

tion, including in the latter case specific protocols concerning on-site verification. Negotiations in 1977-80 for a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty culminated in a progress report submitted to the United Nations that contained clauses, agreed on by the United States, Britain and the Soviet Union, providing once again for on-site verification.

The catch is that the United States has so far failed to ratify either of the two treaties, and in 1982 the Reagan Administration refused to resume negotiations for a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. The standard line put forward by the U.S. government, without any demur from the sheep, is that these negotiated provisions for verification and inspection are unsatisfactory and that new negotiations have to commence. To which the Russians have responded that the proper course is to ratify the two treaties and commence new discussions on that negotiated basis.

In fact the whole verification ploy, as now being operated by the Reagan Administration, is a gigantic nonissue, designed to bamboozle the sheep and sidetrack discussion away from arms control. Take the supposed Soviet cheating. The Administration has claimed that some Soviet tests have exceeded the 150-kiloton limit. Lynn Sykes, professor of geological sciences at Columbia University and a Pentagon consultant, has testified that such charges are calibrated from data from Nevada sites, which have been affected by recent earth movements and volcanic activity. Adjusted for Soviet geological conditions, the evidence shows no Soviet cheating. Other charges of cheating stemmed from failure to distinguish between explosions and earthquakes.

The Comprehensive Test Ban negotiations produced not only an on-site inspection agreement but also a tentative accord to accept continuously transmitting, tamper-proof seismic stations, allowing 90 percent confidence down to 0.1 kilotons in monitoring Soviet geological conditions.

The Verification Scam

Soon it may be impossible for a mouse to fart east of the Urals without the explosion registering on the seismographs of four continents, but still the Reagan Administration will talk about the verification problem and the "cheat-fart factor" in Soviet wildlife. Recent internationally supervised experiments have shown that a global network of monitoring centers can already pinpoint explosions down to one kiloton. The leaders of Sweden, Greece, India, Argentina, Tanzania and Mexico have offered to set up such centers, the better to verify compliance with any test ban.

Stop up one hole and the rabbit pops out of another. The Reagan Administration has tried to argue that the Soviet Union might take advantage of an earthquake to muffle a test explosion. Moscow would have to be on twenty-four-hour alert, waiting for an eruption. Another ludicrous proposition is that the Russians would excavate an immense hole, and this subterranean space would muffle the noise of an illicit nuclear explosion. The volume of rock to be excavated would equal Egypt's largest pyramid and therefore would be unlikely to escape U.S. aerial surveillance. In other words, verification is not a problem. The treaty language is there, the negotiated language is there and the technical means are there. The only things not there are the good will of the Reagan Administration and the interest of the sheep of the Fourth Estate, which let the White House get away with its interminable prevarications on the matter, as was nicely illustrated by the affair of the Gorbachev letter.

Ovines on Overtime

On December 5, Gorbachev sent a letter to Reagan that, among other things, addressed the issue of on-site verification. The letter was made public in an editorial in *Pravda*, published on December 19 and reprinted in *The Washington Post* as an advertisement nine days later. It pointed to the machinery for verification already in place and mentioned "certain measures of on-site verification to remove the possible doubts about compliance" with a ban.

The letter provoked some vintage plunging by the sheep, faithfully following the Administration line, which was to "welcome" Soviet interest in verification as though it was some new phenomenon. Typical was a *Washington Post* story of December 24 by Lou Cannon and Walter Pincus, which quoted a "senior official" as saying, "We're intrigued with apparent Soviet interest in on-site inspection for verification purposes. . . . That's something new for them that deserves to be taken seriously." An earlier *Post* story, by Celestine Bohlen with Pincus, had served up this amazing piece of Administration gobblydegook: "But U.S. officials said in Washington that it [the Gorbachev letter] does not deal with what has more recently emerged as the main White House objection to a test moratorium—the need to keep testing until there are deep cuts in offensive nuclear stockpiles and as long as such weapons are required to deter attack."

The *New York Times* story by Michael R. Gordon had our old friends the officials deploying even more elaborate verbal countermeasures: "An interesting new factor, officials said, is that Moscow has proposed that the verification procedures be applied during a moratorium and before a treaty is ratified. Previously, the Soviet Union took the position that arms treaties needed to be signed and ratified before verification procedures could be carried out." These sentences have such an assured air of peaceful dignity about them that it takes a second or two to remember that at the very moment the officials were selling this to Gordon, the United States was rejecting the opportunity to join the Soviet test moratorium and thus the "interesting new factor" was entirely academic.

Once again the Administration, with the help of its faithful sheep, escaped from a potentially difficult situation. For the Gorbachev letter—at least as mirrored by the *Pravda* editorial—was mainly an eleventh-hour call to the United States to join its moratorium. The issue of verification was a subsidiary point. But just as the Administration countered the original Soviet proposal of July 29 by inviting the Rus-

(*Continued on Page 5*)

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SOVIETICUS.

STEPHEN F. COHEN

An important but little-reported development has occurred in Soviet politics since Mikhail Gorbachev became leader last March. In contrast to the sterile public discourse of the conservative Brezhnev era, vigorous debates are taking place in many areas of policy-making, from economics and personnel selection to culture. Conservative officials remain adamantly opposed to meaningful change, but reformers, once muffled or banished to obscure journals by the complacent dogmas of the Brezhnev leadership, have gained access to authoritative newspapers for their proposals and criticisms of the status quo.

As is clear from growing disputes in the press and from private discussions with officials and informed intellectuals in Moscow, this revitalization of Soviet political life is no less significant than the ongoing process of high-level dismissals and appointments. It indicates that a larger struggle between the friends and foes of change is already under way throughout the system. And it suggests that the possibility of broad reform may be greater than is commonly believed in the West.

Gorbachev has been the catalyst of the new policy debates. In particular, his calls for more "openness" about the country's longstanding economic problems and for "profound changes" have emboldened reformers to speak out. One wrote in *Izvestiia*, "Now is a wonderful time. Everything that yesterday was said at the family table or in smoking rooms or in narrow circles is now being said openly." That generalization wildly exaggerates the real parameters of permitted debate, but several officials and establishment intellectuals insist privately that the limits will continue to expand under Gorbachev. Some of them even foresee a period of "de-Brezhnevization" similar to the far-reaching political discussions and de-Stalinizing reforms of the Khrushchev years.

Most Western observers have ruled out such a possibility by assuming that Gorbachev is committed to achieving higher economic productivity without any kind of liberalization. But liberal Soviet intellectuals are encouraged by what they perceive to be congenial themes in Gorbachev's speeches, as well as by more concrete steps. One is the appointment to crucial posts of officials reputed to be reform-minded or more tolerant, such as Aleksandr Yakovlev, the new head of the Central Committee's propaganda department. Another is the broadening official indictment of the Brezhnev era, signaled in *Pravda* on November 10 and obviously authorized by Gorbachev.

Whatever the leader's intentions, there is an unavoidable connection between economic and political change in the state-run Soviet system. Consider the increasingly numerous proposals to reduce central planning and increase the autonomy of enterprise managers; to decriminalize the vast market in petty consumer services and trade; and to expand the role of family farms. Even if only partially implemented, such measures would have significant political consequences by diminishing the state's bureaucratic control over millions of economic actors—that is, over society.

Other current proposals also have clear political implications. In an effort to find capable rather than merely obedient managers, for example, the Gorbachev leadership is encouraging several local experiments in electing economic officials. If expanded, as now seems possible, the innovation would directly reduce the traditional appointment powers, or *nomenklatura*, of party bosses at those levels. Indeed, the "electoral principle" could become a precedent for filling other positions of authority.

Moreover, Gorbachev's appeal for openness in economic affairs has already spread to other policy areas. The writer Evgeny Evtushenko and the theater director Mark Zakharov have publicly seized the opportunity to demand greater freedom in cultural and intellectual life. As Evtushenko put it, "Today's long-awaited striving for change for the better in our country gives us profound hopes . . . that nonconcealment will become the norm of civic behavior." Other liberal artists and intellectuals are pressing censorship authorities to approve an array of banned works, including anti-Stalinist novels by two prominent Soviet writers. There are even signs that forbidden political questions about the past may be reopened. For the first time in many years, the central press has published elliptical but startling references to Stalin's terror, while the long proscribed image of Khrushchev, a symbol of liberalization, was recently shown on state television.

None of those developments should obscure the tenacious resistance to change that has been pervasive in the Soviet system for decades. Part of it is inertia and general conservative anxiety about anything new. But much of it is militantly self-interested, particularly in response to efforts to reform the economy. State ministries "have no interest in the economic experiment," as Gorbachev has complained, because it threatens their institutional power. Middle-level bureaucrats are opposed to reduced state control, be it economic or cultural, because many of them would become "superfluous," as he has also said. Not all managers actually want more autonomy because it means more responsibility, as reformers are ruefully discovering. And it is unclear how workers, who are accustomed to job security and bonuses regardless of their performance, will respond to Gorbachev's plan to reward the efficient and fire the slothful.

Despite those obstacles, informed Muscovites think that Gorbachev will obtain a pro-reform majority in the Politburo and Central Committee at the upcoming Communist Party Congress. None of them can explain, however, how he will implement any legislated reforms through the recalcitrant bureaucracy. Pressed for an answer, they seek hope in symbolism, as is so often the case in Soviet political life—in the fact that this first congress under Gorbachev is scheduled to open on February 25, the thirtieth anniversary of Khrushchev's historic speech to the Twentieth Party Congress, where he suddenly launched his campaign against the Stalinist past.

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CAPITOL LETTER.

KAI BIRD AND MAX HOLLAND

■ Defense Budget Fiasco

The liberal legislators who voted for the Gramm-Rudman automatic budget deficit reduction bill rationalize that it will actually result in a "revenue enhancement program"—i.e., tax increases. House Democratic whip Thomas Foley is going around town quoting an unnamed Republican senator who likens Gramm-Rudman to a kidnapper who "grabbed the President's favorite son, defense, took him out and cut off his ear, then sent word to the President that if he wants to see his son again, he'd better come up with some revenue."

The Democrats, as usual, are engaging in wishful thinking. Tax increases are the last thing Ronald Reagan will compromise on, and his minions are busy insulating military spending from the effects of Gramm-Rudman. Because the deficit is already $30 billion higher than the target of $171.9 billion, the President will be required to sequester $11.7 billion from the budget by March 1. After eliminating government pension increases, he must divide the remaining $10.4 billion in reductions equally between defense and domestic programs. Nonexempt programs like the Job Corps, Public Health Services and Pell grants for low-income students are expected to be slashed by up to 25 percent.

Defense will be a different story. As Representative Barney Frank put it, "We had a situation where every department of Government was going to get a haircut, so they bought a wig for the Pentagon so not a hair on its head would be touched."

The wig was a $6.3 billion slush fund of unspent money from last year's defense allocation. Unfortunately, despite valiant efforts by Frank to shear the military budget, he and his liberal Democratic colleagues, led by Representative Les AuCoin, were outmaneuvered. In return for a moratorium on antisatellite missile testing, liberals sanctioned a defense budget authority for fiscal 1986 that is higher than the $302.5 billion voted by the Republican-controlled Senate.

Here's how it happened. The House appropriations bill provided $292.6 billion for defense; the Senate's, $302.5 billion. After two angry conference committee sessions, the two bodies agreed on December 19 to split the difference, at $297.6 billion. But this figure did not include the $6.3 billion in defense funds left over from last year. Normally those funds are reappropriated in the new budget, but the conferees transferred them in such a way that they will not be included in the new appropriation. Thus, the Pentagon will actually get $303.9 billion.

Naturally, liberals like Frank cried foul when they realized what the conference committees had done with the $6.3 billion. As a result of their protests, a rider was added specifying that none of the $6.3 billion can be reprogrammed to offset the effects of Gramm-Rudman cuts. But according to Gordon Adams, director of the Defense Budget Project at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, there's nothing to prevent the Secretary of Defense reprogramming those funds without reference to Gramm-Rudman. It's a shell game: the reallocated $6.3 billion will more than make up for the $5.2 billion in Gramm-Rudman cuts.

Was that worth the testing moratorium? AuCoin thought so and told his colleagues, "We here can make more progress in preventing nuclear war than anybody has made in six years. We can stop ASAT testing on both sides."

Liberal naïveté knows no bounds. Within days of the passage of the moratorium a Pentagon official announced, "We will find a way to go ahead." Because the Congressional language bars the testing of an ASAT system "against an object in space," the Pentagon is now contemplating tests against "a point in space."

AuCoin protests that there is "no legal way" to proceed with such a test. But Les Aspin, chair of the House Armed Services Committee, knows better. He calls the ASAT ban merely "a temporary device to buy time." In the future, AuCoin and company, particularly in the shadow of Gramm-Rudman, must strike better bargains with the Pentagon. This was no bargain at all.

■ Who's Afraid of the A.B.A.?

On December 17, the Senate voted 84 to 11 to confirm the nomination of former Senator James Buckley as a judge of the Circuit Court for the District of Columbia, the second most important court in the nation. Why did a right-wing ideologue receive so many Democratic votes?

Most senators like to maintain the pretense that they never vote for a judicial nomination on the basis of politics. Since 1952, when the American Bar Association began vetting nominees for their legal experience, the Senate has generally respected the A.B.A.'s recommendations.

But things are changing. Although Reagan has nominated more than 250 of the country's 743 Federal judges, critics charge that the A.B.A. has blocked the appointment of too many conservatives. Recently the ultra-right Washington Legal Foundation filed suit to force the A.B.A. to make public its deliberations on judicial nominees. In fact, the bar association has certified the vast majority of Reagan's appointees, most of whom are conservative white males.

In the rare instance when the A.B.A. has recommended against a Presidential choice, its advice has been ignored. That is what happened with Buckley, who was initially nominated for the Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, in New York. The A.B.A. gave Buckley a C rating, the lowest passing grade, and voted not to support his appointment. The nomination was then withdrawn and shifted to the District of Columbia court. Buckley admitted that he has never tried a case in court, "other than representing a few obstreperous Yale students in the New Haven city court." He refused to be interviewed by the A.B.A.

When Senator Christopher Dodd cited the A.B.A.'s nonendorsement to his colleagues, Orrin Hatch retorted, "I would not get too caught up in any bar association recommendations." Thus intimidated, good liberals like Gary Hart, John Kerry, Edward Kennedy and Joseph Biden, in a classic demonstration of misplaced liberal tolerance, voted to confirm not only a political reactionary but a judicial ignoramus.

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ARTICLES.

CALIFORNIA COURT FIGHT

Rose Bird Runs For Her Life

EDWIN CHEN

Without warning, a pack of jellyfish descended on the swimming party, sending the vacationers scurrying aboard their boat, where they nursed their wounds. But not Rose Elizabeth Bird. After putting medication on the sting, she jumped back into the Aegean Sea for another dip.

It is with such resolve that Bird is approaching an election year in which she has become the lightning rod of a vitriolic conservative attack against the liberal California Supreme Court, long considered one of the nation's most innovative tribunals. On November 4, six of the court's seven members, including Bird, California's twenty-fifth chief justice, are up for confirmation, running unopposed. If a justice fails to get approval by more than 50 percent of the votes cast, he or she must step down, and a replacement will be named by the governor. The current holder of that office, George Deukmejian, is a hard-line, law-and-order Republican and Bird's enemy. He will also be seeking re-election and is enormously popular. If he wins, and if the voters toss out Bird and her colleagues, he will be able to turn the court 180 degrees to the right, literally overnight.

"For longtime significance, nothing can match this fight for control of the state Supreme Court," Richard Bergholz, a veteran political observer, wrote in the *California Journal*. Harvard law professor Laurence Tribe contends that a defeat for the incumbents could spark a nationwide "witch hunt for controversial judges who rub the current populace the wrong way. Judges will be more worried about their Nielsen ratings than about justice."

To forestall that possibility, Bird and her colleagues have formed individual political action committees, and funds are pouring in from across the nation. Bird's Committee to Conserve the Courts has collected more than $1 million in contributions for the campaign. Of that, $35,000 has been spent to secure the services of Democratic pollster Patrick Caddell. The chief anti-Bird strategist is Bill Roberts, a G.O.P. campaign worker who has served Deukmejian and Ronald Reagan in past campaigns.

Bird's major asset is her opponents' disorganization, which has prevented them thus far from mounting a sophisticated or coordinated campaign against her. One Republican activist founded an organization called Bye Bye Birdie. Other forces, including a group calling itself Crime Victims for Court Reform, have formed Bird Watcher societies up and down the state. The California District Attorneys Association ran a highly publicized Vote No campaign but discontinued it last August when legal advisers warned that it could endanger the group's tax-exempt status. Earlier, the association had released a seventy-eight-page report attacking Bird and several other judges, focusing on their refusal to support the death penalty.

No California appellate judge has ever lost a confirmation vote. But Bird came close in 1978, the last time she appeared on the ballot, when she squeaked by with only 51.7 percent of the vote. She was appointed chief justice in the spring of 1977 by Governor Jerry Brown, and her appointment was controversial from the start. Brown's relationship with the state's 800-odd judges had been a rocky one, exacerbated by his open contempt for the judiciary. Bird's appointment was widely regarded as yet another slap at the brotherhood. Not only was she the state's first female chief justice; she was the first woman appointed to the Supreme Court. Associate Justice Stanley Mosk, embittered because he had not been named chief justice, told Bird, "I accept the fact that you are here. But I don't respect the governor for putting you here."

Undaunted, Bird, who also serves as head of the state's policy-making Judicial Council, moved quickly to take administrative control of California's sprawling court system, which she regarded as an old-boy network. She appointed many women and minorities to the council, shifted its meetings from resorts to the state building, stopped the practice of adopting tentative court rules without seeking public comment, appointed special panels to solicit suggestions on problems such as court congestion, and prohibited council employees from accepting gratuities from lobbyists.

At the court itself, Bird brought in word processors for the clerical staff, lengthened the workday and banned the personal use of office equipment after discovering that an employee was giving gambling tips over an office telephone.

"I disrupted a nice close family," Bird, 49, recalled in an interview several years ago. "But there was enormous power being wielded within a system that comes under no scrutiny at all. We're about the public's business."

Bird also abolished searches of people entering the courtroom because, she said, the practice "created the atmosphere of a police state." She has sold the chief justice's limousine and stays at an inexpensive downtown hotel whenever the San Francisco-based court sits in Los Angeles.

She was criticized deservedly for being vindictive, excessively confrontational, overly suspicious in dealing with others and for surrounding herself with inexperienced but fiercely loyal assistants.

On the bench, she has voted to extend the exclusionary rule for illegally seized evidence, to impose strict standards on the admissibility of confessions, to grant felons the right to carry concealed weapons in self-defense and to allow an accused child molester to claim ignorance of a victim's age as a defense. The most persistent criticism of Bird is that she

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is soft on crime, as allegedly shown by her unwavering opposition to the death penalty. In more than eight years, she has yet to uphold a death sentence. When, for instance, in 1980 the court voted 4 to 3 to uphold California's 1977 death penalty law, Bird dissented, writing: "Today this court sends to his death an impoverished, illiterate and possibly retarded 19-year-old black youth by affirming a judgment that this court would not hesitate to reverse if any other offense were involved." The defendant had been convicted in the brutal killing of two elderly widows. But Bird disagreed with the conviction, which carried a mandatory death penalty, because, she said, the defendant's lawyer provided him with inadequate representation, thus denying him due process.

Bird's egalitarian views were shaped early in life. She grew up on a chicken ranch outside Tucson, Arizona, reared by a mother who would have to work in plastics factories to support three children. A state judge who knows her well said, "She still sees herself as being from a different class than most lawyers and judges, and this has spilled over into her dealings with them."

When Bird was 5, her parents separated. Her father, a hat materials salesman, died shortly thereafter. Her mother took Rose and her two brothers east. Later, Bird won a full scholarship to Long Island University, and then attended graduate school in political science at the University of California, Berkeley, where she met Jerry Brown, who was also a student. She went on to earn a law degree at Boalt Hall in 1965 and clerked for the chief justice of the Nevada Supreme Court, the first woman to do so. After her admission to the California Bar, Bird was hired as a deputy public defender in Santa Clara County; she also was a pioneer in practical legal education while teaching at Stanford Law School. "Even then she was a rebel," recalled one colleague. "She was deeply critical of traditional educators and saw them as being self-satisfied."

When Brown began campaigning for governor, Bird often drove him around Silicon Valley. After his election, he named her head of the huge Department of Agriculture and Services, which has a $227 million annual budget and 16,000 employees.

One of her "greatest joys," Bird recalled, was in redirecting the Division of Occupational Safety and Health to address "the much more serious problems" affecting workers, such as chemical exposure. "My mom worked in a factory and she was slowly poisoned by the solvents, which damaged her kidneys," Bird said. She also led a successful fight to appoint lay people to boards that license physicians, dentists and contractors. California legal scholar William Warren said Bird "has all those qualities we in society admire. She's a hard worker, a humanitarian, a champion of the underdog."

Every poll to date shows Bird losing badly. The surveys are slightly more encouraging for her court colleagues, two of whom, Joseph Grodin and Cruz Reynoso, the court's only Latino, were also appointed by Brown. The others on the November ballot will be Malcolm Lucas, a conservative; Stanley Mosk, dean of the court, who was appointed by Jerry Brown's father, Pat; and recently appointed Justice Edward Panelli. Lucas and Panelli were picked by Deukmejian.

The struggle taking shape in California is raising questions about the wisdom of subjecting state judges to periodic elections, an increasingly popular procedure throughout the country. When Panelli's predecessor, the respected Otto Kaus, announced his retirement last summer, he cited as one reason the strident attacks on the court by the right, adding, "It is very, very difficult to reconcile the appellate process with the necessity of facing a retention election."

Judicial retention elections were introduced about fifty years ago, but the idea didn't catch on until the 1960s. Today about half the states use the mechanism for some, or all, of their judges. Nationally, fifty judges have lost their jobs as a result of these elections.

Misconceptions abound as to the purpose of subjecting judges to popular vote. Some criticize the practice because it fails to stimulate enough voter turnout to produce a valid expression of public opinion; others say that because the judges run unopposed, voters have little or no knowledge on which to make an informed decision. Still others say retention elections are mere rubber stamps. But such criticisms betray a misunderstanding, or a deliberate distortion, of the process. In cases of clear misconduct, states have commissions with established procedures to remove offenders. Beyond that, retention elections allow qualified judges, such as Bird and her colleagues, to serve long terms subject to a limited degree of public accountability.

The unfolding events in California point up broad and disturbing questions, according to Bernard Witkin, whose tomes analyzing California law are used by every judge in the state. "People make the mistake of thinking [the elec-

DRAWINGS BY DAVID SHANNON

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tion] is a one-shot affair," he said in an interview. "It's not just the problem of whether three or four Supreme Court justices shall be confirmed in this election. What we're seeing is a new way to approach judicial elections, challenging [judges'] qualifications on the basis of particular decisions that affect particular groups. . . . If we reach the point where . . . we end up telling the court, 'If you don't do as we want, we'll remove you,' then the courts won't be worth saving."

Bird said she is unperturbed by the right-wing attacks on her. "Our role is an unpopular one because it is to insure that the Constitution is preserved. When you have majority rule, often you are protecting the rights of people who are unpopular," she said. "It's always the minorities who aren't a part of the mainstream, who define what the limits of the state, or the limits of the majority, are going to be. And as a result, the courts are the ones who step in. My role isn't to be politically smart. My role is to do what's right under the Constitution. And if that's politically unpopular, so be it." □

FARM CREDIT BAILOUT

Saving the System, Not the Farmers

JIM SCHWAB

The new farm bill that President Reagan signed on December 23 seeks to reduce farm prices in an effort to make U.S. products more competitive overseas. According to the Food and Agriculture Policy Research Institute in Missouri, however, the law will reduce farm income by 23 percent. The result, says Gary Lamb, an aide to Iowas Senator Tom Harkin, is a "growing sense of desperation among farmers."

The Farm Credit System bailout bill that Reagan signed the same day will also do little to still the growing insurgency against the system's lending and foreclosure policies, and its plans to centralize its local associations. Many farmers feel the system has been more interested in saving itself than in helping them, and the bailout does nothing to dispel this impression. The new law provides scant direct aid to strapped farmers and only a modest borrowers' bill of rights, including the right of a farmer to examine his own loan file. The law also provides a Federal charter for the Farm Credit System Capital Corporation, which will buy up delinquent loans held by member banks in the system. For the first time the system is given a line of credit to the Treasury Department, which can grant additional funds at the discretion of Secretary James Baker. The end result is to put a Congressional stamp of approval on the consolidation moves that have been bitterly criticized by farmers who fear the remaining vestiges of local control will be wiped out.

Jim Schwab recently completed a study on farm credit for the Iowa State Legislature and is assistant editor at Planning *magazine.*

Despite a decline from its peak $82 billion loan portfolio of 1983, the Farm Credit System is still by far the nation's leading agricultural lender, providing over one-third of all real estate and operating credit for farmers and their marketing and production cooperatives. It raises funds by selling bonds on Wall Street, and its members acquire "stock" by leaving a percentage of their loans on deposit. Each stockholder gets one vote in his local association. Local Production Credit and Federal Land Bank associations are represented on the boards of the twelve districts. Those boards each govern three regional subsidiaries—the Banks for Cooperatives, as well as the Federal Land Banks and the Federal Intermediate Credit Banks, which oversee the Production Credit Associations (P.C.A.).

Long before Congress passed the Farm Credit System bailout law, the system was moving to curtail the local autonomy enjoyed by the Production Credit and Land Bank associations. A report called Phase III-Project 1995, which was leaked a year ago, alerted members to this plan. "They are seizing an opportunity when farmers generally are in great trouble to centralize the system," complained Luman Holman, executive director of Grassroots, an independent group of nationwide stockholders.

The report envisioned the formation of a central bank that would expand the system's services to include insurance, brokerage and related businesses not authorized in the Farm Credit System's Congressional charter. More significant, the report called for a reorientation toward serving larger farmers. "Votes according to [loan] volume, rather than membership, may be critical," it said. In other words, the principle that each stockholder would have an equal vote would be abandoned in favor of voting according to the number of shares, as in a private corporation. "The system can no longer afford the luxury of a slow, methodical decision-making process that involves grass-roots input to the extent utilized in the past," the report said. "The system needs national leadership that is accountable and positioned to move swiftly and take decisive action within appropriate checks and balances." Accountable to whom? disgruntled farmers are asking.

Under the bailout bill, a national farm credit bank company will buy up nonperforming loans (those not being paid off), using cash advanced by other system banks, and by the U.S. Treasury when those funds are exhausted. The foundation for this scheme was laid last July with the creation of the Denver-based Farm Credit Corporation of America. Citing the deepening agricultural crisis, the Farm Credit System announced the new bank would serve as "the central policy-making institution for the nationwide cooperative lending system."

The rush to reorganize aroused considerable bitterness, particularly in the districts centered at Spokane, Washington, and at Omaha, which are the first two to receive aid from other system banks because of their parlous financial condition. The Spokane Federal Intermediate

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Credit Bank received a $135 million aid package early in 1985, while the one in Omaha is scheduled to receive $340 million. In both cases, most of the money will go to the new Wichita-based Farm Credit System Capital Corporation, which will buy up delinquent mortgages and hold the properties off the market until land values begin to rise. The theory behind this policy is that removing a glut of foreclosed land from the market will stabilize the collateral value of the remainder of the system's loan portfolio.

Signs of the urge to centralize were apparent two years earlier in the Spokane district. The sparks first flew in 1983 during an audit of the Willamette Valley, Oregon, P.C.A. by the Farm Credit Administration, which serves as the regulatory body for the system. A surfeit of loans for fishing boats—an area the F.C.A. had encouraged P.C.A.s to move into—had weakened some of the associations. Nonetheless, an audit by the regional Federal Intermediate Credit Bank two months earlier had found Willamette Valley to be in good financial health, though it did note $2 million in loan losses because of declining collateral values. The F.C.A.'s auditors, however, calculated those total losses to be $8.9 million, enough to place the P.C.A. in receivership. But its board of directors obtained a preliminary injunction on October 26, 1983, preventing the liquidation. Federal District Judge Owen Panner condemned the Farm Credit Association for its arbitrary appraisal methods and ordered a new audit.

Philip Brandt, president of the Willamette P.C.A. from 1937 to 1980 and since then a voluntary consultant to the board, told me what happened next: "They bled us to death." Brandt contends that the Farm Credit Association conducted "a laborious examination procedure," which lasted several months. During that time, the uncertainty about the P.C.A.'s future caused its most solvent customers to withdraw, leaving it a corporate shell. With two other coastal Spokane-district P.C.A.s also in financial trouble, Brandt said, liquidations caused the bottom to fall out of the fishing boat market, further eroding the banks' equity.

With the district in trouble, members were asked by system officials to vote for a plan that would consolidate all the Production Credit Associations into one entity and all the Land Bank Associations into another to serve the entire five-state region. Brandt and other members fought this proposal, mobilizing opposition through the Ag Credit Crisis Committee, in Salem, Oregon. The first vote, held in June, required the unanimous approval of all the local associations. The Eastern Idaho P.C.A. and the Blackfoot, Idaho, Land Bank opposed the merger and defeated the plan. Another vote was held in which the rules required only 80 percent approval and allowed the dissenting associations to remain independent. This time the plan passed. A Montana P.C.A. voted to leave the system entirely and reconstitute itself as an independent lender. Meanwhile, several members of Congress requested that the General Accounting Office study several liquidations. The G.A.O.'s findings, released this past October, generally upheld the F.C.A.'s procedures but did not examine the Willamette Valley case because at the time it was still in litigation.

Last fall, farmers in the Omaha district were urged to follow the consolidation route. With fifteen of thirty-one Land Banks rejecting the merger, the Midwestern rebellion proved to be widespread.

Former Iowa P.C.A. loan officer Melvin Schneider maintains that farmers should follow the Montana association's example rather than knuckle under to system pressure for consolidation. If they formed and capitalized their own credit unions, he told me, they could acquire discounted loan funds from the Federal Intermediate Credit Bank under the 1971 Farm Credit Act. However, Schneider points out that the weak financial condition of most farmers makes it almost impossible for them to amass the capital necessary to qualify for those funds as an independent lending institution. An alternative would be for state governments to invest economic development funds in rural credit unions. Schneider says two such fledgling credit unions have already organized in Iowa and are signing up members. "They would be a much better investment for the state than the $30 million proposed for a World Trade Center in Des Moines," he says.

Merger drives by system banks in other districts also provoked member uprisings. Militant protests against P.C.A. policies started in Ohio, which is in the Louisville, Kentucky, district, two years ago and there have been revolts in Wisconsin and North Dakota, which are in the St. Paul, Minnesota, district. The St. Paul Intermediate Credit Bank fired its general counsel, James Corum, when he advised the board that P.C.A.s could not be forced to reorganize or merge against their will.

Texas, a single-state district and one of the most financially sound, has bred a unique rebellion. Forty-four of forty-six Federal Land Bank Associations there pooled their funds for a legal battle against the imposition of joint

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management for the three banks in the state. With Republican attorney John Connally, the former governor and Presidential candidate, among their counsel, the Land Banks have sued district officials, while intensively lobbying their Congressional delegation for measures to retain the existing structure. Representative Sam Hall has been leading their charge legislatively. Eleven Texas P.C.A.s joined the battle against the district consolidation. Voluntary assessments for the lawsuit by the Texas associations have made theirs the best funded rebellion in the country. They have also turned their statewide member group, Grassroots, into a national force representing disgruntled borrowers.

That attempt illuminates some divisions in the ranks of the rebellion. Unlike other districts, the revolt in Texas started among the Land Banks and is a preventive action by people who still have something to lose. Land Banks have traditionally dealt with larger customers than the Production Credit Associations. The Land Banks were the first part of the Farm Credit System to be authorized by Congress, in 1916, largely because private banks had failed to offer credit tailored to farmers' mortgage needs. Many farmers with those mortgages have also been able to get operating credit from private banks and do not have to go to Production Credit Associations. Thus, there has been a subtle class distinction between Land Bank and P.C.A. borrowers.

Texas Land Bank members feared joint management would lessen their power and independence. That does not necessarily imply that most P.C.A. borrowers desire mergers; the voting in the Omaha district refutes that notion. But the Texans bring a more conservative political flavor to their debate than the Midwestern dissidents. Horace McQueen, board chair of the Tyler, Texas, Land Bank, told two Nebraska groups at a September meeting in South Sioux City that the trend toward centralization of the system "smacks of socialism."

What bothered some of the Texans most bothered some of the Midwesterners least: the prospect of government intervention to bail out the system. The Texans maintained that a bailout could be avoided if officials used the available internal resources and reversed the consolidation movement. Iowans like Jim White, a member of a farmers' delegation that has met regularly with district and F.C.A. officials and with Iowa lawmakers, saw some form of bailout as inevitable. They'd been saying the system is in bad shape well before F.C.A. governor Donald Wilkinson, reversing a long-held position, declared last September that $5 billion in Federal assistance was needed. Lawmakers on Capitol Hill from farm states had mixed feelings about a bailout because they were not sure what good it would do. Senator Harkin, for example, said a bailout would help the credit system without helping the farmers. He preferred reforming farm policy to restore profitability. He also sought to set a floor under farm land prices below which lenders could not sell foreclosed land or value it as collateral. Harkin's approach was embodied in an amendment to the bailout bill but was defeated by a narrow margin. The amendment included a provision requiring the Capital Corporation to sell the properties it acquires by foreclosure to family farmers, thus preventing corporations and absentee owners from buying them up.

Meanwhile, Congress awaits the findings of a massive G.A.O. audit of the system due next spring. Last October, the General Accounting Office projected that the system's losses, through June 30, 1986, would be $2.6 billion, a figure F.C.A. spokesman Ron Erickson contested. The Reagan Administration ordered an independent audit by the Price Waterhouse accounting firm, but most people no longer see the question as whether the Farm Credit System is swimming in a sea of red ink. Now, it's what to do about the system before it drowns. □

'Annexation'

(*Continued From Front Cover*)

Annexation is seen as potentially a major turning point in Israel's relationship with the West Bank and Gaza because it would formally end the occupation. Most observers believe this fundamental change will come about only through the formal application of Israeli law to the territories. Until that happens, the territories will remain the way they were on the day military occupation was proclaimed. I believe, however, that annexation will never occur because both its proponents and opponents prefer the present amorphous situation. Conservatives who favor annexation do not need the formal act since they regard the territories as already part of Greater Israel. After all, one does not annex one's own homeland. They also see no need to face the practical problem of bringing the territories under Israeli law. The present method of governing them is more convenient because it effectively excludes the Palestinians from political participation and does not entail making decisions on the permanent status of the local population. Military government by decree is free from the checks and balances of the democratic process and allows Jewish settlers to function as an *imperium in imperio*.

The opponents of annexation are also interested in retaining the existing military occupation because it preserves the fiction of nonannexation and the illusion that certain political options are still open. On their part, Palestinians fear the symbolic finality of annexation; they see it as a death sentence to their hopes. Palestinian leaders, mainly those in the Palestine Liberation Organization, regard it as an irreversible act that would negate their long political struggle.

There was no particular reason for me to try to shatter that curious unanimity. I simply decided that the coziness was too dangerous. I feared the system was becoming respectable, and the ambiguity about its true character served only to perpetuate an unjust status quo with all the familiar trappings: disenfranchisement of 1.3 million people, separate administrative systems, denial of basic human and

Meron Benvenisti is a former Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem. This article is excerpted from his forthcoming book, Conflicts and Contradictions *(Villard).* *©1986 by Meron Benvenisti.*

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communal rights, inferior services, segregation. Parallels, none of them flattering to Israel, could be drawn from four corners of the globe. Yet, the system was allowed to develop and become institutionalized behind the shield of legitimacy the military occupation provided. Progressive and civil liberties–minded Israelis criticized and indeed struggled against the blatant violations of human rights, the Jewish vigilantism and the expulsions, but they dared not repudiate the fundamental, constitutional legitimacy of the system, the tyranny disguised as military government. Their approach was political: withdrawal, territorial compromise, a peace agreement between Israel and the Arabs. But they could offer no realistic alternatives, and the situation resisted a comprehensive solution.

Many in Israel argue against granting equal rights to the 1.3 million West Bank and Gaza Palestinians by raising the specter of a binational country, which would mean the loss of the Jewish nation-state. But that raises another fundamental question, I argued: Is Israel to be a Jewish state or a democratic one? I concluded that the question was not hypothetical; it demanded an immediate answer. Otherwise, the decision would be made by default.

That conclusion ran counter to everything I believed in. It amounted to admitting total failure of our effort for a solution. But I decided to contend with the realities as I saw them and warn my political allies that the battle was lost, that we should prepare for the next one lest we lose the war. I expected strong reactions but not the outpouring of abuse from my own friends. "Premature," "spreading despair," "Likud spokesman," "naïve," were but a few of the epithets. A faction of an important dovish party whose representatives sit in the Knesset would allow me to speak at one of their meetings "only if you use the opportunity to disavow your views." During an Israeli-Palestinian dialogue in Jerusalem someone asked why I had not been invited. He was told that if I had been present, the focus of the discussion would have shifted from a "constructive path" to nihilism.

Likud and the settlers adopted me. They interpreted my findings to mean that their hold over the land is secure. An editorial in *Nekuda*, the organ of Gush Emunim, the right-wing settlers movement, stated:

> We are encouraged by Benvenisti's findings, which state that Jewish settlement is so firmly established that its dismantling or even putting it under foreign sovereignty is inconceivable. Therefore, he suggests that a plan be devised that will enable the two populations, the Jewish and the Arab, to coexist according to Israel's legal system. We give our blessing to this.

Yet Likud officials, especially those who deal with foreign diplomats and press, were extremely uneasy about my statements on the dual system and the unjust treatment of the Palestinians. The Likud reaction reinforced my isolation because it served the peace camp as proof of my desertion.

It was ironic: a concerned liberal, documenting the dynamics of a disastrous process, I found myself rejected by my colleagues and endorsed by my enemies. I was trying to make an entirely different point. When I said that we face a dilemma, I meant that we have a choice. I called for a new ideological equilibrium that would restore our options, including the option of partition. At present, I argued, all our options are foreclosed because for eighteen years the Israeli government acted, either casually or deliberately, to foreclose them. But our options can be re-created if we think in terms of the realities of the 1980s rather than those of the 1960s.

Unfortunately, Israeli liberals and Palestinians still pin their hopes on a *deus ex machina*—the intervention of an external power such as the United States or the European nations to exert pressure on the Israeli government. Expressing this widespread faith in outside intervention, one Israeli dove said, "There is no such thing as irreversibility [on the West Bank] unless you assume that a country can perpetually decide its own fate. Even the U.S. can't do that."

The indications, however, are that the world is sick and tired of the perpetual tribal conflict between Jews and Arabs. In the past, Western nations involved themselves in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a result of their perception that it was a major cause of instability in the Middle East. The industrialized nations also believed that the stability of the West's oil supplies depended on finding a solution to the "Palestinian problem." But events in the past decade, including the collapse of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, the Iran-Iraq war, the growing unrest in the Persian Gulf, the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty, the war in Lebanon, have changed their thinking. No longer do they desire a solution in the Middle East for reasons of *Realpolitik*. Now the issue of the West Bank has become almost exclusively the concern of civil libertarians and leftists, a constituency which has little influence on world affairs and which is incapable of exerting pressure on the Israeli government.

Israelis must face up to the central dilemma of the Jewish state. That dilemma is not a new one—we have been faced with it ever since the end of the Six Day War—but it has

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become more urgent. It can be expressed as the contradiction among the three goals of Zionism: land, state and humanistic values. Keeping the territories means losing either the Jewish nation-state or its liberal-democratic character. If we absorb 1.3 million Palestinians as citizens, Israel will not long remain Jewish; if we continue to deny them their rights we betray our political ideals.

For my liberal friends this was an impossible choice, and they sought to avoid it by assuring themselves and others that the land-for-peace option was still open. But if it is, and the threat to Israeli democracy is so acute, why haven't they shown a greater urgency and a willingness to make fair territorial concessions to the Palestinians?

The outcry against my contention that the land-for-peace option has been foreclosed stems from a more profound and troubling reason, however. Liberals are unwilling to address the problem as a human rights issue. They construe the granting of political or academic freedom, the equalization of labor conditions, the ending of economic discrimination and usurpation of water resources as signifying annexation, which would forestall a "comprehensive solution" to the Palestinian problem. But why do liberals oppose granting Palestinians the same rights that Israeli settlers have been granted? Why do they accept the Palestinians' inferior status as long as it is described as a temporary expediency? The human rights problem is placed in abeyance, "until the future of the territories is determined by the negotiating parties," as government officials like to say. A solution must be found first, they continue, but that depends on Arab willingness to accept our terms. So the conflict between our humanistic values and Zionist imperatives is brushed aside, lest we find ourselves wanting. And it's too easy to claim national security as justification for continuing the Palestinians' second-class status.

The aversion to a binational state also needs to be analyzed. I agree that such an arrangement could be a recipe for eternal strife, as the experience of many multiethnic societies shows. But to elevate the concept of a homogenous Jewish state to the level of supreme moral imperative plays into the hands of those who would sacrifice essential values to safeguard it. What if all our efforts to negotiate a political solution fail and we find ourselves living in a multiethnic polity? Would we pack up and leave or would we be obliged by our humanistic convictions to create consociational arrangements such as cantonization or power sharing to reconcile conflicting imperatives?

Israel's Founding Fathers were faced with a similar problem. As drawn by the United Nations in 1947, the borders of the new Jewish state contained an Arab population that amounted to 49 percent of the total. Our leaders did not shrink from the challenge. They accepted it, giving assurances to the United Nations in a memorandum that stated:

> What will be the character of the State? It will be an independent self-governing Palestinian state with a Jewish majority, in which all citizens, regardless of race or creed, will enjoy equal rights, and all communities will control their internal affairs. The state will not be Jewish in the sense that its Jewish citizens will have more rights that their non-Jewish

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fellows or that the Jewish community will be superior in status to other communities, or that other religions will have an inferior rank to the Jewish religion.

The Israeli Declaration of Independence was formulated before the extent of the Arab exodus following the 1948 war was known. Indeed, the Arab exodus simplified the multiethnic problem, but those who had assured the United Nations had not known that. Some of them are still active in Israeli politics and especially active in the peace camp. Why was it kosher then to prepare for the eventuality and *treif* ("unacceptable") now?

To the Likud Party the problem is no longer theoretical. Since it has ruled out partition, it assumes a multiethnic state. Unlike the liberals it cannot hide behind the argument that the occupation is only temporary. From its statements one may conclude it has resolved the dilemma I spoke of earlier: democracy is to be sacrificed on the altar of a Jewish state. It envisions a *herrenvolk* democracy, in which the minority is disenfranchised and deprived of other basic civil rights. This repressive system is justified by a neo-Zionist philosophy emphasizing a superior Jewish claim to the land. The contradiction between Jewish state and democracy is masked by the claim that Israeli citizenship will be extended to all Palestinians who ask for it and who declare their allegiance to Zionist goals, a preposterous proposition.

The Israeli body politic, like all multiethnic entities, is faced with three simple choices: majority tyranny, power sharing or partition. The current situation corresponds to the first. Both power sharing and partition presuppose an agreement between the two parties. The de facto partition of Palestine in 1948 created, at tremendous human and material cost, two almost homogenous areas and could have become a long-term solution to the conflict. Since then, however, the two groups have become territorially intermingled. Partition would necessitate a fundamental change in political perceptions, and would exact a high price. Considering the alternatives, however, it seems the only permanent resolution. Power sharing or consociation would require a minimal willingness of political leaders to cooperate across the sectarian divide and would need the approval of the dominant majority. Therefore "peaceful coexistence" does not seem a realistic possibility but rather a recipe for strife and instability.

Since both options—partition and consociation—are either impractical in the short run or unattractive in the long run, the third and worst option, majority tyranny, has won by default. The only hope is to come up with short-term alternatives to combat the institutionalization of a *herrenvolk* democracy.

In finding them, the attitudes and actions of the Palestinians will be crucial. Whereas the Israeli predicament is conceptual and ideological, Palestinian suffering is real. For them the situation is unbearable and must be drastically altered. Yet many Palestinians cling to the belief that only one solution is possible—a state of their own. That is indeed the only desirable ultimate solution, but they are powerless to attain it. They find themselves caught in an apparent contradiction between the short-term necessity of operating within the realm of the possible under Israeli rule and the long-term objective of self-determination. They regard working within the system as legitimizing the status quo. Their dilemma is similar to that of Israeli liberals, and they suffer from the same inability to devise realistic policies, thus licensing the continuation of the occupation. Yet as the suffering people on whose behalf Israeli liberals struggle, only they can legitimize short-term action. Without their approval, Israeli liberals are paralyzed.

Although the Palestinians' freedom of action is limited by Israeli controls, they are not completely powerless. They possess an enormous asset: the land that 2 million of them, including those in pre-1967 Israel, have clung to. Despite discriminatory Israeli policies they have prospered, and their natural population growth is very high. More significant, they have managed to resist Israeli attempts to fragment them. Their cohesion remains strong, and a better educated younger generation is beginning to replace the older elites.

Israel underestimates the internal Palestinian factor. Obsessed with political maneuvering by the P.L.O. and national security considerations, it ignores the slow but steady accumulation of Palestinian communal power, the true potential of which will be realized only when Palestinians decide to work within the system. As long as they practice violence and rejection, they will be dismissed as a security problem to be dealt with by the military. Once they adopt the Zionist tactics of communal power building, the Israeli predicament will cease to be theoretical. Immediate objectives do not necessarily foreclose broader solutions.

In his book *Samed, The Third Way: A Diary of Life on the West Bank*, Raja Shehadeh, a Palestinian lawyer and ac-

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tivist, describes the bitter but realistic interim goal that is emerging from the Palestinians' protracted suffering. By *samed* Shehadeh means "steadfastness"—stubbornly clinging to the land, working with dignity and perseverance and not falling into either the terrorist or the collaborationist traps. The book is a moving personal document rather than a political program, but such a program is bound to come. It is only a matter of time. Shehadeh was encouraged by the Israeli response to his book, though he confused humanitarian sympathy with political support. But humanitarian sympathy is a powerful instrument for combating inequalities and may help build a bridge over the sectarian divide that ultimately could create political options.

There is a strong element of *moledet*, the Hebrew word for "love of homeland," in Shehadeh's book. He writes of standing on a hilltop, watching the golden strip of the Mediterranean coastline, yearning for Jaffa, his parents' native city, which is now part of Tel Aviv. His best Jewish friend is a *moledet* enthusiast, and together they lament the destruction of the environment by Israeli bulldozers cutting through the terraced olive groves. Reading Shehadeh's moving narrative, I remembered what an Arab friend said when I pointed out the relative scarcity of Arab literary expressions of the longing for one's homeland. "A man who lives with his beloved," he replied, "feels no need to give poetic expressions to his feelings, for she is tangible. Only he who has lost his beloved, is far away from her, or unsure of her love, is forced to give poetic expressions to his yearning. If, heaven forbid, we are fated to undergo 2,000 years of exile, we too will write poems full of yearning for Jerusalem, no less profound than yours."

Samed and *moledet*, steadfastness and possession; *al-Awda* and *hashiva*, the return to Jaffa and to Bethel: the same longings, the same attachment, the same human feelings. It is hard to perceive the symmetry, for longing nurtures an exclusive possessiveness and suffering nurtures a sense of absolute truth. Yet understanding another's fears and hopes should not detract from one's own. Understanding is not identical with agreement. We have been at each other's throats long enough to realize each other's sincerity, no matter how many years the struggle must continue.

The curtain is raised on a new act of the old tragedy. Unlike earlier acts, the two tragic heroes have come center stage and all the supporting actors have withdrawn. The heroes conduct a dialogue. The tired audience listens to the exchange and wonders if catharsis is at hand, or whether another, even more horrifying act must be endured. □

Beat the Devil

(*Continued From Page 39*)

sians to come and personally verify a test explosion in Nevada, so too—with the Soviet moratorium in its final days—did it now sideline the substantive matter of the moratorium and then, with matchless hypocrisy, announce to the sheep that Gorbachev's letter was "promising."

It remained only for the lead *New York Times* editorial for December 30 to hammer the remaining nails into the coffin. Addressing itself directly to the Soviet moratorium it noted the U.S. rejection and asked: "Is a critical chance to moderate the arms race being lost? Hardly. A nuclear test ban is no substitute for an agreement to limit nuclear arsenals." Welcome to the hall of mirrors. *The Times* went on to sneer at the Soviet unilateral moratorium for "lasting a mere five months" and to reject the Administration's arguments about verification but insist that "the central issue is not how to ban nuclear tests but how to lessen the incentive for launching a surprise attack." Thus did *The Times* abruptly dispose of one of the central premises of arms control: the ability to test is what promotes the technological spiral of the arms race, which produces growing political instability and increases the likelihood of deliberate or accidental nuclear war.

Star Wars in Their Eyes

That is the final ovine submission to the White House policy. Behind all the buffoonery about verification has been the Administration's central insistence on the need to continue testing. Sometimes it argues that testing is necessary to "catch up" with the Russians, though no informed person believes that they are ahead. Sometimes it argues that testing is necessary for existing programs, though in fact the MX, Trident II and enhanced radiation weapons have already been exhaustively tested. Sometimes it argues that testing is, in the words of Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Perle, "indispensable to maintaining the credibility of our nuclear deterrent." "Is it?" as an excellent editorial by Harold Evans in *U.S. News & World Report* on December 16 asked. "If the Soviets prolonged their moratorium, would we say we had nothing to fear because their deterrent had lost its credibility?"

No, the main reason the Administration wants to continue testing is that as a matter of philosophy it has no interest in arms control and as a matter of practical necessity it wants to press forward with S.D.I. which requires nuclear testing beneath and above the surface of the Nevada desert. The X-ray laser, already deeply mired in technical problems, will also require testing in the atmosphere, which will mean the repudiation of all past agreements including the Partial Test Ban of 1963. This was the one instance of a unilateral American arms control initiative. President Kennedy suspended above-ground tests. Moscow followed suit and the Partial Test Ban Treaty was signed. Today the Administration discounts the importance of test bans and pushes ahead with new generations of weaponry, rationalizing all this by saying that the completed program will lessen the incentive for a surprise attack. This, as you may remember, is what *The Times* said is the great priority today. Thus did the Administration and the press successfully unite against a Soviet peace threat. The Russians will no doubt resume testing and the Administration will say, "We told you all along they were not serious." The hungry sheep look up and are duly fed.

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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

The Fundamental Skeptic

DON BOGEN

THE TRIUMPH OF ACHILLES. *By Louise Glück. Ecco Press. 60 pp. $13.50.*

The first poem in a book is inevitably an introduction, with all the potential for pleasure or disaster this entails. Most poems approach this task cautiously, or at least politely: they want to be liked. Louise Glück's new book, in contrast, demands our attention from the start by its severity, its negation of all that is commonly expected:

> It is not the moon, I tell you.
> It is these flowers
> lighting the yard.
>
> I hate them.
> I hate them as I hate sex,
> the man's mouth
> sealing my mouth, the man's
> paralyzing body—
>
> and the cry that always escapes,
> the low, humiliating
> premise of union—
> ("Mock Orange")

The opening of *The Triumph of Achilles* is hardly an attempt to cozy up to the reader by striking a familiar pose. We are compelled, rather, by the urgency of the voice and the harsh originality of its claims. "Mock Orange" is an outrageous poem; it takes huge risks in subject and tone. Its stance is extreme, blunt, unaccommodating, and Glück has the poetic control to present it without melodrama or portentousness. Her word choices, particularly the verbs "sealing" and "escapes," are startling in their precision. The way she caps the scene with a characteristic abstraction—that "premise of union"—gives a distance that heightens rather than dulls the immediacy. Fierce yet coolly intelligent, Glück's poem disturbs not because it is idiosyncratic but because it defines something we feel yet rarely acknowledge; it strips off a veil.

Glück has never been content to stop at the surfaces of things. Among the well-mannered forms, nostalgia and blurred resolutions of today's verse, the relentless clarity of her work stands out. Her subject is human loss; her vision is tragic. From *Firstborn* (1968) through *The House on Marshland* (1975) to *Descending Figure* (1980), Glück has narrowed and deepened the focus of her work, paring away extraneous concerns, excess verbiage, ornamentations of form and style. In lines that grow more stringent with each book, she examines and rejects all the traditional consolations for loss: fond memories, a benign god, love. Even the lonely achievement of art, that last hope for transcendence from flawed life, is revealed as a perverse obsession, a "need to perfect,/ of which death is the mere byproduct" ("Dedication to Hunger"). Her poetry is grounded in fundamental skepticism. Its allegiance is not so much to beauty as to truth. If some poets resemble painters in their fluid creation of whole worlds across blank pages, Glück reminds us more of the sculptor chipping at resistant stone until its essence is clear.

Glück's new collection is in some ways a departure from this mode. Her basic subjects and tone haven't changed, but the range of the work has expanded. Larger and more varied than her earlier books, *The Triumph of Achilles* shows her experimenting with new types of poems, from Orientalist attempts to capture the moment to songs, narratives and long mixed sequences. Language is looser, embracing the casual as well as the concise, and Glück's sense of the line has broadened too. While some of the poems in this book, like "Mock Orange," have the pared-down elegance of her earlier work, others are by turns airier, denser or more intricate. Her free verse is more generally free to linger over a detail, to lope along or, as in these lines from "Morning," to soar:

> it is pleasant to wake like this,
> with the sun rising, to see the wedding dress
> draped over the back of a chair,
> and on the heavy bureau, a man's shirt, neatly folded;
> to be restored by these
> to a thousand images, to the church itself, the autumn sunlight
> streaming through the colored windows, through
> the figure of the Blessed Virgin, and underneath,
> Amelia holding the fiery bridal flowers—

Not all of this new work is equally successful. Some of the shorter poems and sequence sections—"Hawk's Shadow," parts of "From the Japanese"—seem a bit too entranced with the ephemeral, and Glück's occasional reliance on parable, as in "The Mountain," can make for thin reading. But the book as a whole keeps the power of the early work while extending its reach.

Glück's new poetic resourcefulness serves her well in "Marathon," a group of nine poems tracing the phases of erotic life. Arousal appears in the sequence as a turgid, long-lined song, gradually reaching lucidity as obstacles are swept aside. In "First Goodbye," jealousy takes the form of a taunt to the lover, cutting in its sibilants, bleak abstractions and sudden shifts in the line break:

> Go back to them,
> to increment and limitation: near the centered rose,
> you watch her peel an orange
> so the dyed rind falls in petals on her plate. This
> is mastery, whose active
> mode is dissection: the enforced light
> shines on the blade.

"The enforced light," "the centered rose"—these severe, almost awkward phrases give a jagged edge to the lines that fits the mood perfectly. It's in such choices—vocabulary, word placement, images—that the poet's skill is most apparent. "Marathon" is also impressive for its analysis. While Glück has not given up her distrust of easy transcendence, the sequence looks closely at the genuine ecstasies sex can provide. "Night Song" goes beyond standard romantic visions to show how desire ultimately isolates as much as it unifies. In the title poem that concludes the sequence, Glück evokes that realm

> where only the dream matters
> and the bond with any one soul
> is meaningless; you throw it away.

Her picture of this strange place is haunting yet familiar. No poet since D.H. Lawrence has explored the terrain with such insight.

Though Glück's poems are intimate, they are not personal in the way we expect. A reader looking for the comforting minutiae of everyday existence (or a

Don Bogen's book of poetry, After the Splendid Display, *will be published by Wesleyan University Press this spring.*

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way to link the poems with the biographical notes) would be disappointed. Glück is too strict to indulge in easy generalizations from her own life. Even in a love poem to her husband or a study of her father's death, the perspective is distanced, careful, analytical. It respects both her subject and her own role. There is deep self-awareness behind this work, but that's the starting point for the poem, not its goal. Instead of relying on the illusion of personal authenticity—"this really happened, I was there"—Glück trusts the craft and thought in the work itself to prove its claims.

She also trusts the imagination. One of the real pleasures in *The Triumph of Achilles* is the wealth of characters, viewpoints and settings created here. Glück has always done well with family scenes and the landscape of Judeo-Christian mythology. In the new book she expands her domain. A Victorian husband rebukes his barren wife in the blunt closing poem, "Horse." "Baskets," in contrast, is brimming with abundance as an old woman wanders a village market among "crates of eggs, papaya, sacks of yellow lemons." "Hyacinth," one of several fine poems on classical themes, conjures a passionate world in which courtiers run weeping through a "glittering grove" and gods sink "to human shape with longing." The idea of something beyond human capability has long been central to Glück, and the Greek gods seem particularly suited to her purposes. Aloof yet still afflicted with desire, they are both apart from us and part of us. She uses them to clarify what being human means.

Louise Glück's basic concerns—betrayal, mortality, love and the sense of loss that accompanies it—are serious. She is at heart the poet of a fallen world. If this world offers us triumph, it will come like that of Achilles in the title poem: not in his crowing victory over Hector but in his grief for his lost friend Patroclus, his accession to "the part that loved,/the part that was mortal." Glück's work to define that mortal part shows dignity and sober compassion. □

One of the Missing

JOHN SEABROOK

THE OLD GRINGO. *By Carlos Fuentes. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 199 pp. $14.95.*

Ambrose Bierce was 71 when, in 1913, he rode alone into Mexico to see the revolution. "I want to go down there and see if those Mexicans can shoot straight," he explained to a friend. 1913 saw a lot of shooting, with Villa and Zapata and Carranza all up in arms, and while the marksmanship may not have come up to Bierce's standards, it was apparently sharp enough. Bierce disappeared. Journalists and adventurers went looking for him; the U.S. government made inquiries; even General Pershing, while chasing Villa through Mexico in 1916, kept an eye peeled. But no trace of the author of "One of the Missing" was ever found. The man who imagined hundreds of violent deaths in his fiction left it to others to imagine his. And that, after a fashion, is what Carlos Fuentes has done.

The Old Gringo is a fascinating novel to reflect on, though at times a dense, bewildering one to read. It is not really an imaginary biography, and the reader expecting a lively yarn about Bierce's disappearance will be disappointed. Fuentes is more interested in the symbolic possibilities of Bierce's story than in its details. He has written a parable about the United States and Mexico, a parable in which Ambrose Bierce is the organizing symbol. This primary idea breeds many others, and one is amazed here by the fertility and profligacy of Fuentes's mind. The novel is also a celebration of Bierce's fiction, especially his fine short story "A Horseman in the Sky," in which a Union sentinel kills his father, a Confederate officer. From patricide it's no great leap to revolution, to the removal of Díaz the tyrannical father of Mexico by Madero the spiritual son, who was murdered by Huerta, who was defeated by Carranza, who was pushed out by Obregón, and so on. Meditations on Mexican identity are offered, and on the role of death in Mexican society. And death reminds Fuentes of sex, and sex of violation, and violation of Mexican history—of the Conquistadors, of the *Yanquis*, and once again of Bierce.

Why Ambrose Bierce? In part because

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Bierce was the first American writer—one of the first writers in any country—to reject the glory and heroism of war and describe instead its savagery and stupidity. While William Dean Howells ("Cato Howells," Bierce called him) was laying down the "rule of probability" in fiction, Bierce was exploring dreams and the supernatural—a fascination which earned him the status of literary freak. It's not surprising that a Latin American writer should be more sensitive to Bierce's genius than his countrymen. *The Old Gringo* is rich with allusions to Bierce's stories and to his life. His father was a Calvinist farmer who left Massachusetts to look for better times in Ohio, and left Ohio for Indiana, but failed everywhere he went. Bierce remembered him as an "unwashed savage." One of his stories, "An Imperfect Conflagration," begins, "Early one June morning in 1872 I murdered my father—an act which made a deep impression on me at the time." Nevertheless Bierce inherited his father's lust for the frontier, and when his three years of service in the Civil War were over he lit out for Omaha. Eventually he made it to San Francisco, where he became young William Randolph Hearst's star muckraker and achieved moderate fame as the town misanthrope. He was called "Bitter Bierce" and "The Devil's Disciple," the latter name derived from his *The Devil's Dictionary*, a collection of epigrams and bilious pronouncements such as "Mind: A mysterious form of matter secreted by the brain," and "Once: Enough." But once was apparently not enough when it came to civil wars and new frontiers, and Mexico in 1913 offered both.

Frontiers and borders are much on Fuentes's mind in *The Old Gringo*. The novel begins with Harriet Winslow, an aged American lady, sitting in her Washington, D.C., walk-up trying to remember Mexico. The narrative is filtered through her memory. She "saw the dust marshaling itself into some kind of silent chronology." Dissolve to a few sweating soldiers digging by lantern light in the Mexican desert. They uncover a coffin, break it open, and stare into the sunken blue eyes of a dead gringo. Dissolve to the same gringo, alive, crossing the Rio Grande into Mexico. As he crosses the bridge it bursts into flames. Or perhaps he only imagines the flames; throughout the novel Fuentes weaves together ordinary and fantastic events. We understand

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that the border is like a curtain of flames in the national unconscious, that the gringos have crossed it too many times in aggression to be trusted when they come across in peace. Later in the book a Mexican soldier says, "They're right when they say this isn't a border. It's a scar." Was this why the López Portillo government was so angry, in 1978, when the Carter Administration called off the natural-gas deal? Because it was another case of *Yanqui* deception? And how can the Mexicans be anything except deeply suspicious of the International Monetary Fund–sponsored stabilization plan? *The Old Gringo* isn't about oil or immigration, but it helps one understand how deeply rooted these issues are in the Mexican psyche. "They hate us," says Bierce at one point. "We're the gringos. Their eternal enemies."

And what of the gringos, how do they perceive the Mexicans? Bierce and Harriet Winslow are the two gringos in the novel. Winslow is 31 years old. She has come to the Mirandas' hacienda as an "instructress" for the children, but before she reaches her destination, one of Pancho Villa's regiments, led by General Tomás Arroyo, has forced the Mirandas to flee. The revolutionaries have burned everything except for the Mirandas' mirrored ballroom, and it is here that Winslow and Bierce meet. Bierce has already won Arroyo's respect by shooting a hole through the middle of an airborne silver peso. Now he is trying to rescue Winslow from her missionary impulses. She wishes to prevent the soldiers from splintering the ballroom's parquet floor with their spurs. "Look at them, what these people need is education, not rifles. A good scrubbing, followed by a few lessons on how we do things in the United States, and you'd see an end to this chaos." It's the old Wilsonian save-Mexico-from-the-Mexicans idea, which led to the invasion of Veracruz in March 1914. Fortunately Fuentes allows Harriet Winslow to grow beyond this attitude as soon as he has made his point with it—the point being that Americans have trouble understanding Mexico because they see only their own obsessions reflected there. The mirrored ballroom is an eloquent symbol of this solipsism, a symbol which returns again and again in the book. For the Hearsts or the Rockefellers with their material obsessions, Mexico is the land of gold and oil. For Woodrow Wilson with his moral obsessions, Mexico is the seat of depravity and barbarism. Bierce, obsessed with death, went to Mexico to die. "To be a gringo in Mexico . . . ah, that is euthanasia," he wrote just before leaving. The line becomes a refrain in *The Old Gringo*.

But the novel is not only about hatred, violence and misunderstanding between our two countries. It is also about our intimacy. It's not an easy intimacy and it's hard to understand because it comes from violence and hatred, from negative things. Bierce needs the Mexicans to kill him. He is suspended between living and dying, like Peyton Farquhar standing in a hangman's noose in "Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge." Or as Fuentes puts it, "like a drop of water on a solitary winter leaf when the only question is which will fall first: the leaf or the drop." He needs Tomás Arroyo to put the bullet inside him, to give him the *coup de grâce*. But why Arroyo, "an illiterate guerrilla," "a buffoon who had to be taken seriously"? There is no simple explanation. It has to do with Arroyo's virility, "his brown hard chest and deep navel and uneasy sex . . . the hard long testicles like a pair of furry avocados swinging but hard as stones between his slim, sleek, hairless Indian thighs." It has to do with penance for *Yanqui* crimes. And just as Bierce needs Arroyo to kill him, Harriet Winslow needs the Mexican to seduce her. Bierce's death and Harriet's orgasm happen together in one long, remarkable piece of writing which is the climax of this remarkable book:

> Then he took her once more and as she felt that rough and svelte body pounding so fiercely and so sweetly against her clitoris, knowingly stroking it with his own nervous and sleek body as he lasted inside her for an eternal moment, waiting for her to come, relying not only on his hard shaft but on this stroking, pounding, second heartbeat from his pubis on her clitoris, she knew this was an instant and that she would never have it again. . . . She came with an unbearable groan . . . a scream of love that told the world that this was the only thing worth doing, worth having, worth knowing, nothing else but this instant between that other instant that gave us birth and that final instant that took away our life forever.

The Mexican and the American are together for that instant, and then they separate. "You are offering me what I can never be," Harriet Winslow says bitterly. □

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Back in the World

MONA MOLARSKY

IN COUNTRY. *By Bobbie Ann Mason. Harper & Row. 245 pp. $15.95.*

For the past six years I have spent my Sundays watching a young girl grow up in North Plainfield, New Jersey. North Plainfield, with its main street, 7-Eleven, liquor store and boarded-up restaurants, is Bruce Springsteen country, living proof that the elegiac verses of "My Hometown" are not overstatements.

A happy ending in North Plainfield is when you stay out of trouble, get a job, get married and buy a microwave oven. After six years of Sundays I've finally grasped that. Watching Kirsten grow up has meant that I'll probably never watch ballet, listen to Mahler or read Wallace Stevens in quite the same way again. I have acquired a sort of double vision. Now when the curtain rises and the dancers glide on stage, they are sometimes displaced by images of New Jersey's industrial skyline. And occasionally, in the middle of an adagio or a line of poetry, a young girl's voice interrupts to ask what all this has to do with her world. Kirsten and I have had to learn each other's language. For me there have been many initiations—my first shopping trip to K mart, my first Sunday dinner at Burger King, as well as my first six-hour miniseries recorded on a VCR and played back speeded up to Kirsten's voice-over narration.

So when I picked up Bobbie Ann Mason's novel, *In Country*, about a 17-year-old Bruce Springsteen fan who comes of age among the fast-food chains of western Kentucky, I read it with fascination. Critics have talked a lot about this novel's rural background—Samantha Hughes, otherwise known as Sam, has a grandmother called Mamaw and a grandfather, Pap, who live on a farm. But the landscape Mason describes is mostly a place where tobacco fields are giving way to subdivisions, and economics has pushed all but a tenacious few off the land. Sam's inner life isn't filled with pastoral scenes but with images from television, brand names and rock songs.

It is 1984, "the summer of the Michael Jackson *Victory* tour and the Bruce Springsteen *Born in the U.S.A.* tour," and Sam has just graduated from high school. She spends the summer waiting around for a job at Burger Boy and trying to find out about the Vietnam War. The war interests Sam deeply. Her father was killed in Vietnam before she was born, and her uncle Emmett was psychologically messed up there. But in Sam's mind, Vietnam is farther away than the moon. When she thinks about the war she pictures a few images on a TV screen, news clips she saw when she was small. When she tries to imagine her father's death she thinks of the episode on *M*A*S*H* when Colonel Blake dies:

> Years ago, when Colonel Blake was killed, Sam was so shocked she went around stunned for days. She was only a child then, and his death was more real to her than the death of her own father. Even on repeats, it was unsettling. Each time she saw that episode, it grew clearer that her father had been killed in a war. She had always taken his death for granted, but the reality of it took hold gradually.

Sam lives with her 36-year-old uncle Emmett in a down-at-the-heels house in Hopewell, where they subsist on tacos, Pepsi and Mountain Dew. Emmett hasn't had a steady job since he got back from Vietnam, and he can't seem to keep a steady girlfriend either. Mostly he hangs out with other vets at McDonald's, watches television, plays Pac-Man and lavishes affection on a cat named Moon Pie. It is Sam's concern about her uncle that starts her asking questions. She suspects that Emmett, who has frequent headaches and a bad case of acne, may be suffering from the effects of Agent Orange. But no one, including Emmett, will take her theory seriously.

She reads up on the war in library books and plies Emmett and his veteran friends with questions, but she can't find out very much. Tom, a vet Sam has a crush on, tells her: "You might as well stop asking questions about the war. Nobody gives a shit. They've got it all twisted around in their heads what it was about so they can live with it." Sam starts to understand just how difficult Vietnam must be for its veterans when she goes home with Tom and finds he's impotent. It's not a physical wound, he explains, but a mental block. The Great Wall of China, he bitterly calls it.

The Vietnam vets aren't the only ones

Mona Molarsky is a writer who lives in New York City.

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in Hopewell suffering from mental blocks. When it comes to the past, everyone Sam knows seems to go blank. Her own mother, Irene, has remarried and moved away, preferring to forget her early life. And Mamaw and Pap, Sam discovers, have left their son's war diary on a shelf unread. When she asks them about her father, they repeat that he was a good boy who didn't smoke and never took a drink. The diary gives Sam her first real glimpse of her father, who, at her age, wrote there, "Dead gooks have a special stink." Instead of heroism, Sam finds a dispiriting banality.

In this world of amnesia and paralysis, rock-and-roll is the one thing that offers Sam some kind of sustenance. Listening to her mother's old records—the Beatles, the Doors, the Kinks—or turning the dial on her radio, she finds fuel to get her going. She hears John Lennon urging her to imagine and Springsteen singing a song that might be Emmett's song if he could locate his own anger enough to sing it:

> Born down in a dead man's town,
> The first kick I took was when I hit the ground.
> You end up like a dog that's been beat too much
> Till you spend half your life just covering up.

Yes, Hopewell sent its boys to fight a television war—and no one there was, or is, equipped to deal with either past or present horrors. Hopewell has become a collection of fast-food outlets and dilapidated houses in which people sit dazed before their TV sets.

Mason first mapped out this country in *Shiloh and Other Stories*, in 1982. *Shiloh*'s characters are much like the residents of Hopewell, except there's no feisty kid like Sam to churn up the dust, and so the effect is quite different. The title story of *Shiloh* introduces us to Norma Jean and her husband, Leroy, a truck driver on disability, who sits at home doing needlepoint and building miniature log cabins while Norma Jean throws her energies into self-improvement. She lifts barbells, eats a cereal called Body Buddies, learns to play the electric organ and even goes to night school. In the end Norma Jean decides to leave, and Leroy realizes that "the real inner workings of a marriage, like most of history, have escaped him." There's no denying the feeling of emptiness evoked by this story. But here Mason, like Raymond Carver and many contemporary American writers, seems content to detail a way of life and then trail off. Would a reader really be greedy in asking for something more, some broader perspective or deeper understanding?

In Country, on the other hand, is neither so reticent nor so modest. Mason takes a risk here; she pulls back from the tight close-up of the short stories to suggest a context. The Norma Jeans and Leroys, we find out, live on a planet where landscapes are defoliated and napalm is dropped. Are the two realities connected? *In Country* argues that they are. Naïve people are the ones shipped to the front. McDonald's golden arches, prime-time comics and brand name products that loom larger than life are roadside attractions along the way.

But popular culture, as Mason presents it, is not homogeneous. The same airwaves that bring Join-the-Army jingles and easy listening music to Hopewell also bring the reflective and defiant Springsteen. For Sam and her friends, Springsteen's music means so much because it comments on their lives in a medium they're completely at home with.

Mason's exploration of the ways in which popular culture can either encourage or challenge naïveté is an ambitious project and one not without its problems. While remaining true to the spirit of Sam's character, Mason must paint a backdrop wide yet detailed enough to offer a complex vision. At times her uncontrived heroine seems out of place in the slightly self-conscious structure of the novel. A trip Sam makes "in country" to Cawood's Pond to get in touch with the G.I. experience seems a forced attempt on the author's part to manufacture a classic epiphany in the American "wilderness." And the closing scene of the book, which describes the visit Sam, Emmett and Mamaw make to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, is somewhat sentimental, revealing less than it intends. Yet such lapses are minor next to Mason's achievements.

Ironically, the people Mason seems to care most about are the ones least likely to read her book. One recent Sunday I brought Kirsten a copy of *In Country*. Would she recognize the characters, I wondered? That was weeks ago, and the book is still sitting where I left it—next to the TV, which is always on.

Whose literature is this anyhow? Is Mason really talking to the Sams of this world? If so, I wish her the best of luck and suggest a backup group dressed in matching T-shirts. As for that other audience, those who buy books, Mason illuminates American culture as it exists not for the educated but for the majority of Americans. It is a reality many of us ignore at our risk. To quote the Hart Crane of rock-and-roll: "Take a good look around. This is your hometown." □

LINGO.

JIM QUINN

Self-styled language conservatives, like political conservatives, sometimes adopt a pose of know-it-all judiciousness. Not for them the headlong rush after fad and fashion, the mob's giddy urge for newness. Staunchly, sometimes sadly (for they know the cause is lost), they stand up for the civilities of the past and the language of our fathers. In their complaints about words like *Ms* or *hopefully* or *prioritize*, you can almost hear the voice of Carlyle opposing the Reform Act of 1832 or Matthew Arnold speaking out against the disestablishment of the Church of England. Erudite orthodoxy guards the gates of literacy. Of course it's all a fraud, as anyone can discover by reading William Safire's "On Language" column in *The New York Times Magazine*.

Safire is our leading sociolinguistic conservative, and with the help of a group of indefatigably alarmed correspondents he likes to call Lexicographic Irregulars, he publishes a weekly list of words we should worry about. The tone is urbane; the criticism is quiet, even jocular; the information, dead wrong. On the evidence of Safire's columns, language conservatives are a small-minded bunch, so removed from erudition and so mentally lazy that they are strangers to the most primitive of research methods: looking words up in the dictionary.

All you need to demolish most Safire articles is a couple of good historical dictionaries: *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate*, the *Oxford English Dictionary* and its supplements. I'll take a single column, "Invasion of The Verbs," from October 6, 1985, as a sample of Safire's method.

"Invasion of The Verbs" warns us

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against the new verbs that are "being coined every day." An adwriter from N.W. Ayer has heard a conductor say, "The last two cars of this train will not platform at Talmadge Hall," and is appalled at the presumption of the working class. *To platform* seems to him as bad as that other voguish verb, *to parent*. Phil Gailey of *The New York Times* reports that politicians talk of *profounding* the issues. Safire himself has come across *liaise* and *post-mortem* used as verbs. Worst of all, Harold C. Schonberg of *The Times* has overheard an editor say that fresh news "mooted the story." And "I hoot," adds Harold, "at the moot."

First of all, as Safire himself admits in the column, making nouns of verbs and verbs of nouns or even of adjectives is a basic strategy of our language. So basic that the oldest and most intimate English words are the ones most likely to be both noun and verb: *hand, mouth, eye, bed, house, father, mother* and so on. The structure of modern English makes this functional shift easier for us. In most Indo-European languages you can tell what a word is by looking at it. In English you often have to have the word in context. "The cage" is a noun; in "I *cage*" the word is a verb; and in "the *cage* door" it works as an adjective. If speakers of English stop shifting words about in this way they won't be conserving the language, they'll be inventing a radically different one.

A little dictionary work could have saved us all this fuss. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, *to platform* first appeared in print in 1793. Among the users cited are Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Abraham Lincoln. *To parent* has been around since 1663. *To profound*, listed as obsolete by the *O.E.D.*, started in 1412 with Lydgate; Sir Thomas Browne is cited for three separate shades of meaning. *Liaise* is relatively new, though it is one year older than Safire. The *O.E.D.* calls it "services slang" and dates it from 1928. Among those who have used *liaise* as a verb without harm to the English language are Louis MacNeice (*Holes in Sky*) and Lawrence Durrell (*Mountolive*). *Post-mortem* is cited first as an adjective (1837), then as a noun (1844), then as a verb (1871); but new words are usually around for years before they finally appear in the conservative medium of print, so all three of those forms were probably used simultaneously. *Moot* as an adjective has only been around since 1577. The noun and the verb are much older; the *O.E.D.* gives the same year for the appearance of both, circa 1000. *Moot*, a verb before the Norman Conquest, a verb almost from the dawn of English as English, has continued in ordinary use down to this very day—among its users are William Langland (1362), John Henry Newman (1848), Andrew Lang (1902). Webster's adds Edmund Burke and many contemporary citations, including *Commonweal*. *Moot*, that humble and ordinary verb, may be—thanks to the wit of Harold C. Schonberg and the language expertise of William Safire—the oldest word in the English language ever attacked as new.

Membership in the Lexicographic Irregulars even extends to some language professionals. They write Safire the kind of relieved confessions of conservatism you sometimes hear from tipsy liberals late in the evening. Sometimes they are so relieved at unburdening themselves that they forget everything they know. "Invasion of The Verbs" quotes William A. Kretzschmar Jr. editor of the *Journal of English Linguistics*, at length. Kretzschmar rejects *orientate*: "It seems to me an ugly duplication of *to orient*," and more strongly, *to dialogue*: "I find it impossible to see how any subject person or group could unilaterally impose a dialogue on or with somebody else. . . . I shouldn't make such judgments, and should just believe in the doctrine of usage, but I can't help it—I won't abdicate my own right to decide what I am willing to say or write." Kretzschmar is so eager to attack new words that he has misunderstood or forgotten the nature of English verbs. Some verbs indicate that the subject imposes on the object. Others indicate joint efforts: *conspire, collude, cooperate, interview* and *make love* come to mind. There is nothing illogical about the verb *dialogue*. And even if there were, it's too late to complain about it; *dialogue* has been around since 1597. The *O.E.D.* cites Shakespeare as first user (*A Lover's Complaint* and again in *Timon of Athens*), then, among others, Richardson (*Pamela*), Coleridge and Carlyle.

All those writers, who are highly regarded in some circles, wrote without the benefit of advice from the *Journal of English Linguistics*, of course; but it's doubtful that they would have changed their minds anyway. And why should we? Kretzschmar has also misunderstood "the doctrine of usage." When words are used in new ways—as words are in every living language—you can either discover their new meaning or make do with a limited vocabulary. Approval is irrelevant. The respectable Victorian editors of the *O.E.D.* included the word *windfucker* (a kestrel, a term of opprobrium; Ben Jonson, "Did you euer heare such a windfucker as this?"), but that doesn't mean they used it in conversation. Kretzschmar prefers the verb *orient* (first cited in 1847), but I like *orientate* (1849); both are derived from the noun (1386) or maybe the adjective (1450). What difference can it make to anyone else which word we use? You are free to follow Kretzschmar's advice on usage if you like, though if you're looking for a model of expressive language, does it make sense to search the pages of scholarly journals and newspaper supplements, or are you more likely to find one in *Timon of Athens*?

But, as Safire says in "Invasion of The Verbs," "Esthetics counts. *Prioritize* strikes me as ugly," and that new verb *nutshell*, which has "the ring of jargon," should be replaced by "boil down." "The clerk nutshelled the contrast between the former time and the present," wrote Mark Twain in *Life on the Mississippi* (1883); readers are invited to model their usage on the writer they prefer. They might also check how *boil down* works as a synonym in that sentence.

Of course, esthetics do not count at all when it comes to the sound of individual words. If *orientate* is uglier than *orient*, why isn't *potentate* uglier than *potent*? Find the suffix *-ize* so ugly you avoid it? What do you say for *baptize, capsize, realize* and *economize*? Isn't *domicile* more elegant than *house*, and *whither* more educated than *where to*? And don't we habitually avoid those educated and elegant variants just because they are elegant and educated? If you have any personal standards of word beauty, it should be easy for you to arrange the following list in esthetic order: bobolink, spaghetti, air conditioner, smegma, against, how, fremd, forb, laterally, gerontophilia, rape. Admit the task is impossible and you admit that good usage doesn't depend on word sound but on word meaning and context. Sometimes we like words that sound sonorous or sibilant, sometimes guttural and crunchy. What is wrong with that?

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But even those questions are beside the point when considering Safire's columns. The problem is simply inattention to the task at hand. "Invasion of The Verbs" attacks some thirty new verbs as inventions of the day. I list them, more or less in order, with the date of their first appearance in print, or with an X where the verb cannot be found listed as standard in contemporary dictionaries:

implement (1806), *dotted-line* (X), *fast-track* (X), *platform* (1793), *parent* (1663), *network* (1887), *surveil (1966), satellite* (X), *statement* (X), *videotape* (1958), *accessorize* (1939), *concertize* (1883), *funeralize* (1654), *mainstream* (1974), *leaflet* (1968), *credential* (1888), *source* (1513), *interface* (1964), *access* (1966), *moot* (1000), *sunset* (X), *demagogue* (1656), *cheap shot* (X), *excess* (1888), *orientate* (1849), *dialogue* (1597), *prioritize* (1966), *nutshell* (1892), *disambiguate* (1963), *disincentivize* (X).

There's arguably some use in resisting words that can't be found in any dictionary, though I don't know how you'd resist a word like *prioritize*, even if you wanted to. Make sure to write "list things in order of their priorities" instead? No one will notice. Every time you see the word in print write aggrieved letters to some expert? All that does is call attention to *prioritize*, and help spread the new meaning.

Surely there's no sense in resisting words listed in major contemporary dictionaries. They are not there because the editors like them or approve of them or use them but because they have collected so many citations from so many sources that the word is in widespread use. Like it or not, ugly or not, the verbs *platform* and *implement*, like the noun *spaghetti* (a relative newcomer in 1888), are indisputably part of the language.

Clearly the Dislexicographers are not interested in language but in self-defense. Mostly male and almost entirely white, they find themselves surrounded by new ideas, new books, new music, new art, new language—and new young competitors. Words are the only things they can reject as new merely because they're new (and ugly, and threatening). Hardly anyone knows or cares enough to contradict them, so they attack what they think is the language of people they're frightened of (blacks, feminists, the poor and especially the young), and they attack the language of people they envy (successful politicians, better ad-writers, skilled grant-getters, bureaucrats who have what the conservative linguists really want—lifetime somnolent security). The problem isn't new words; it's middle age.

That's why Dislexicographers react with so much fury when you point out that they're wrong. They don't want to look in the *O.E.D.* They just *know*: "Dammit, whatever the dictionaries say, despite moony poets like Elizabeth Barrett Browning and slips of the tongue by Abraham Lincoln, *platform* is not a verb!" That confidence is their badge of superiority to the general ruck of the rest of us.

So proceed with caution correcting your conservative friends; you'll lose them if you're too triumphant. But correct them anyway. The *Oxford English Dictionary* is available at a very good price through the Book-of-the-Month Club; *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate*, an excellent dictionary on many counts, lists the date each word first appeared in print and costs less than $20. That's a small price to pay for stopping people when they start to gas on and on, gloomily and bitterly, arrogantly and ignorantly, about the sorry state of the English language, for—there ought to be a verb for it—stopping people when they start to safire around. □

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Crossword Puzzle No. 2086

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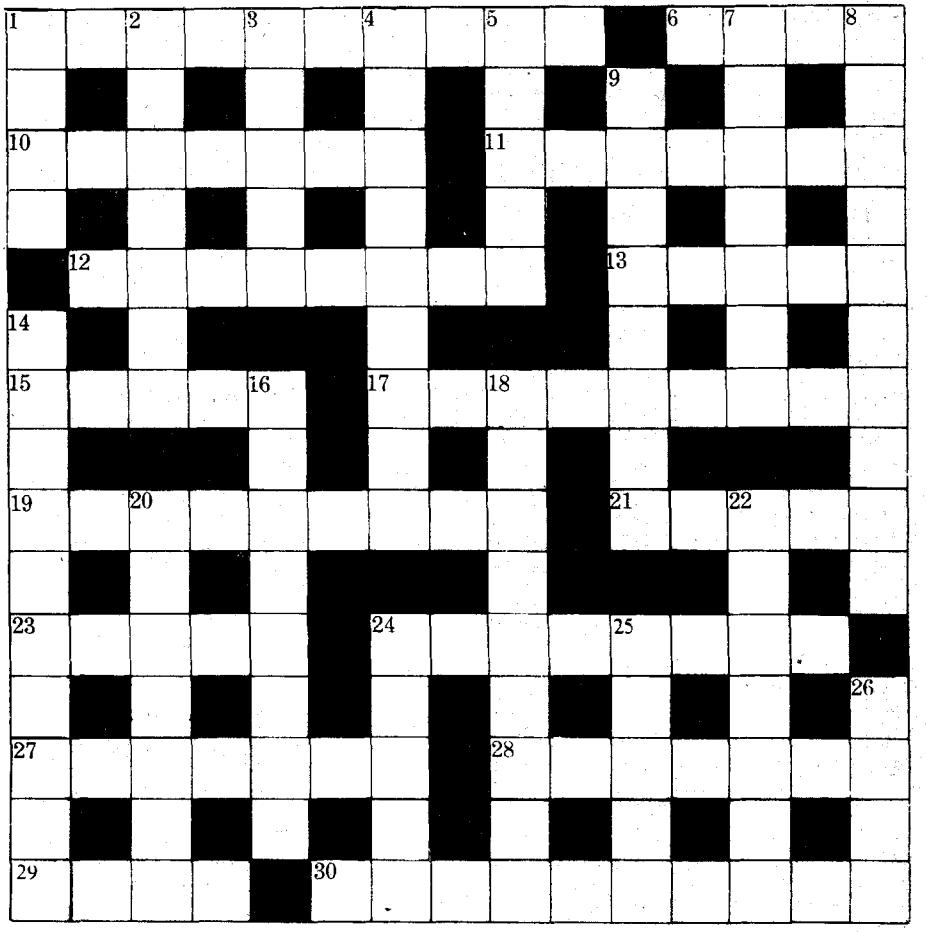

ACROSS

1 Doze in front of the family circle—you might look in it for something to cover your lap. (6,4)
6 A voting coalition sounds like an obstruction. (4)
10 Where one might dig up an automobile—red, naturally! (7)
11 Harp on this, for example, if sort of windy! (7)
12 Some cuts made this way, with things so worn. (8)
13 Stir caused by caviar, for example, around our country. (5)
15 Might each one of these possibly represent a quarter of the deck workers? (5)
17 Settles, as an unexciting version. (9)
19 From outside, came Ronald—to show what this guy wrote! (9)
21 See 4 down
23 Nothing before a sort of 10, with propellers. (5)
24 Fix? It might be useless, at times. (4-4)
27 Pleased, in a way, with what might be passed. (7)
28 Fault-finders might, and can bring it back to choose. (3-4)
29 and 9 down How to make this hour fly? Sleep! (It's inviting, too!) (4,8)
30 Tell the one who did without bowing! (Collectors might.) (4,3,3)

DOWN

1 Churchill got a laugh for talking about some chicken and some this. (4)
2 Up-rising—right on what is supposed to be tender! (Honestly, one doesn't take things so!) (7)
3 I do it badly, obviously, but one may not be able to do anything right! (5)
4 and 21 across You might find joints in a swell condition with this. (9,5)
5 Snare? Not exactly, but comes close! (5)
7 A garland certain to provide an enjoyable time for some. (7)
8 What they use to put milk in cans, or certain things in some radio equipment? (10)
9 See 29 across
14 A distinguishing peculiarity, used once in certain tests. (10)
16 Well-known actor—a sort of stud—popular in certain musical circles. (8)
18 We are told they weren't put carelessly in suspense prior to a certain visit—just hopefully. (9)
20 Cut off one without breeding. Follow? (7)
22 Cover clearly or speciously. (7)
24 If you've got change for a dime, press here, for example. (5)
25 It might indicate the proper time to look at something. (5)
26 If you want to see what some play overseas, ask a traveler, obviously! (4)

We regret that two clues to puzzle 2085 were dropped. They were: 26 across Modern description of pursuit—but it doesn't really matter. (7); 21 down Independent people might not like to find themselves with knobs. (6).

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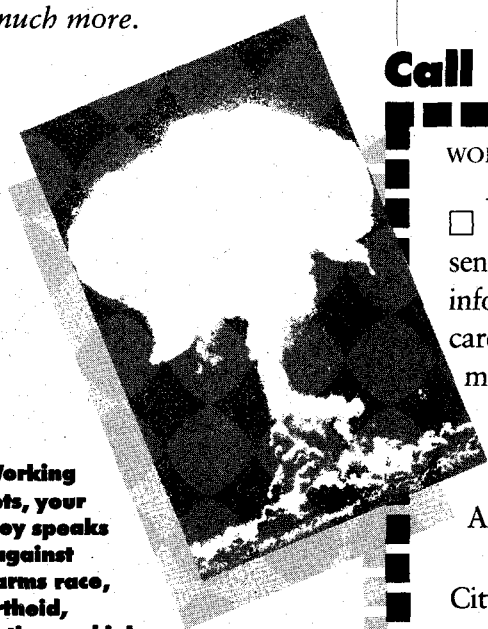

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